

Hume's Political Discourses

David Hume



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Discourses, by David Hume. Edited, with
an Introduction by William Bell Robertson.

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HUME'S POLITICAL DISCOURSES.

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Hume's Political Discourses.
With an Introduction by
William Bell Robertson,
Author of "Foundations of Political
Economy," "Slavery of Labour," Etc.

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INTRODUCTION.

Regretting the meagre records of the life of Adam Smith, the Right Hon. R. B. Haldane, M.P.,^[1] remarks:—"We think of him, in the main, and we think of him rightly, as the bosom friend of David Hume" (b. 1711, d. 1777). Naturally, incidents in the life of a philosopher are neither numerous nor stirring. It is unreasonable to expect them, and such stories as are handed down regarding great thinkers are best not to be accepted unreservedly. I leave Hume, therefore, to present his own picture as drawn in *My own Life*—the picture he wished posterity to have—which consequently follows this introduction, and is itself followed by Adam Smith's celebrated letter to Mr. Strahan, Hume's publisher, giving an account of Hume's death.

It is chiefly as a political economist that Hume concerns us here, as it is in the *Political Discourses*, first published in 1752, his economic principles are set forth. What the reader may expect to find in these *Discourses* I prefer to let writers of renown tell. Thus Lord Brougham—

"Of the *Political Discourses* it would be difficult to speak in terms of too great commendation. They combine almost every {p-viii} excellence which can belong to such a performance. The reasoning is clear, and unencumbered with more words or more illustrations than are necessary for bringing out the doctrines. The learning is extensive, accurate, and profound, not only as to systems of philosophy, but as to history, whether modern or ancient. . . . The great merit, however, of these *Discourses* is their originality, and the new system of politics and political economy which they unfold. Mr. Hume is, beyond all doubt, the author of the modern doctrines which now rule the world of science, which are to a great extent the guide of practical statesmen, and are only prevented from being applied in their fullest extent to the affairs of nations by the clashing interests and the ignorant prejudices of certain powerful classes."

Thus, again, J. Hill Burton,^[2] Hume's biographer—

“These *Discourses* are in truth the cradle of political economy; and much as that science has been investigated and expounded in later times, these earliest, shortest, and simplest developments of its principles are still read with delight even by those who are masters of all the literature of this great subject. But they possess a quality which more elaborate economists have striven after in vain, in being a pleasing object of study not only to the initiated, but to the ordinary popular reader, and of being admitted as just and true by many who cannot or will not understand the views of later writers on political economy. They have thus the rarely conjoined merit that, as they were the first to direct the way to the true sources of this department of knowledge, those who have gone farther, instead of superseding them, have in the general case confirmed their accuracy.”

The *Discourses*, in Hume's own words, was “the only work of mine that was successful on the first publication,” and its success was great. Translated into French immediately, “they conferred,” says Professor Huxley, “a European reputation upon their {p-ix} author; and, what was more to the purpose, influenced the later school of economists of the eighteenth century.” On the same head Burton says—“As no Frenchman had previously approached the subject of political economy with a philosophical pen, this little book was a main instrument, either by causing assent or provoking controversy, in producing the host of French works published between the time of its translation and the publication of Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in 1776. The work of the elder Mirabeau in particular—*L'ami des Hommes*—was in a great measure a controversial examination of Hume's opinions on population.”

Professor Knight of St. Andrews, again, echoes similar sentiments.

“The merit of the *Discourses*,” he remarks, “is not only great, but they are unrivalled to this day; and it is not too much to affirm that they prepared the way for all the subsequent economic literature of England, including the *Wealth of Nations*, in which Smith laid down the broad and durable foundations of the science. . . . The effect

produced by these *Discourses* was great. Immediately translated into French, they passed through five editions in fourteen years. They were a distinctive addition to English literature, and were strictly scientific, though not technical. They at once floated Hume into fame, bringing him to the front, both as a thinker and as a man of letters; and posterity has ratified this judgment of the hour. . . . They contain many original germs of economic truth. The effect they had on practical statesmen, such as Pitt, must not be overlooked. It was perhaps an advantage that the economic doctrines, both of Hume and Smith, were published at that particular time, as they led naturally and easily to several reforms, without being developed to extremes, as was subsequently the case in France.”

All this testimony as to the merits of the {p-x} *Discourses*—testimony from men of widely divergent views—is sufficient justification for offering them in popular form to the public at a time like the present, when the foundations of political economy are, one might say, being re-laid.[3]

We have already hinted at the friendship that existed between Hume and Adam Smith. Hume was Smith’s senior by twelve years, and seems to have had the latter brought under his notice by Hutcheson, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University. In a letter to Hutcheson, dated March 4th, 1740, he says—“My bookseller has sent to Mr. Smith a copy of my book,[4] which I hope he has received as well as your letter.” “The Smith here mentioned,” Burton says, “we may fairly conclude, notwithstanding the universality of the name, to be Adam Smith, who was then a student in the University of Glasgow, and not quite seventeen years old. It may be inferred that Hutcheson had mentioned Smith as a person on whom it would serve some good purpose to bestow a copy of the *Treatise*; and we have here evidently the first introduction to each other’s notice of two friends, of whom it can be said there was no third person writing the English language during the same period who has had so much influence upon the opinions of mankind as either of these two men.” {p-xi}

Hume’s influence upon Adam Smith was great. Even in the ring of the phraseology of the *Wealth of Nations* I sometimes fancy I can hear Hume. Anyway, the book referred to in the above letter as sent to Smith, Mr. Haldane considers as “in all probability” the determining factor in making

Smith abandon his original intention of entering the Church. “Whether Hume could have been but for Smith we cannot now say; but we know that, but for Hume, Smith could never have been.”^[5] While agreeing that “but for Hume Smith could never have been,” I see no reason to question that Hume could have been without Smith. Hume had within him what may here be called the divine light, and it had to come out. That is why, “in poverty and riches, in health and sickness, in laborious obscurity and amidst the blaze of fame,” his ruling passion—a passion for literature—never abated. No man can strike out for himself an original line and stick to it like this, “through thick and thin,” unless he have assurance of the truth of that that is in him. Hume had this assurance. True, he sought fame—and he achieved fame; not for its own sake—that is inconceivable in so great a thinker, a thinker with such a true notion of the relation of things—but for the sake of the truths he had to promulgate; for the higher his eminence the wider and more attentive would be his audience. Of course, he sought fame, and he found gratification in it. It was not the gratification of vanity, however, that writers on Hume usually interpret it as; it was the gratification arising from the knowledge that one has hit the mark—that one has not laboured in vain. The petty vanity ascribed to Hume would not have ^{p-xii} suffered him as “the parent of the first elucidations of political economy to see his own offspring eclipsed, and to see it with pride”—his attitude, according to Burton, on the successful reception of *The Wealth of Nations*. Vanity, again, would have prevented between these two men that unalloyed friendship so charming to contemplate.

In 1776, the year before Hume’s death, *The Wealth of Nations* appeared, and here is how Hume writes to the author:—

“February 8, 1776.

“DEAR SMITH,—I am as lazy a correspondent as you, yet my anxiety about you makes me write. By all accounts your book has been printed long ago; yet it has never been so much as advertized. What is the reason? If you wait till the fate of America be decided, you may wait long.

“By all accounts you intend to settle with us this spring; yet we hear no more of it. What is the reason? Your chamber in my house is always unoccupied. I am always at home. I expect you to land here.

“I have been, am, and shall be probably in an indifferent state of health. I weighed myself t’other day, and find I have fallen five complete stones. If you delay much longer I shall probably disappear altogether.

“The Duke of Buccleuch tells me that you are very zealous in American affairs. My notion is that the matter is not so important as is commonly imagined. If I be mistaken, I shall probably correct my error when I see you or read you. Our navigation and general commerce may suffer more than our manufactures. Should London fall as much in its size as I have done, it will be the better. It is nothing but a hulk of bad and unclean humours.”

At last the book appears, and Hume writes his friend, April 1st, 1776:—

{p-xiii}

“I am much pleased with your performance; and the perusal of it has taken me from a state of great anxiety. It was a work of so much expectation by yourself, by your friends, and by the public, that I trembled for its first appearance, but am now much relieved. Not but that the reading of it necessarily requires so much attention, and the public is disposed to give so little, that I shall still doubt for some time of its being at first very popular. But it has depth and solidity and acuteness, and is so much illustrated by curious facts that it must at last take the public attention. It is probably much improved by your last abode in London. If you were here at my fireside, I should dispute some of your principles. I cannot think that the rent of farms makes any part of the price of produce,^[6] but that the price is determined altogether by the quantity and the demand. . . . But these and a hundred other points are fit only to be discussed in conversation.”

Hume, though he “took a particular pleasure in the company of modest women, and had no reason to be displeased with the reception he met with from them,” died unmarried. Adam Smith also died unmarried, “though he was for several years,” according to Dugald Stewart, “attached to a young lady of great beauty and accomplishment.” Hume, in the Essay “Of the Study of History,” speaks of being desired once by “a young beauty *for*

whom I had some passion to send her some novels and romances for her amusement.” David was a “canny” man though. In these circumstances the following playful sally in a letter from Hume to Mrs. Dysart, of Eccles, a relative, may have interest:—“What arithmetic will serve to fix the proportion between good and bad wives, and rate the different classes of each? Sir Isaac Newton himself, ^{p-xiv} who could measure the course of the planets and weigh the earth as in a pair of scales—even he had not algebra enough to reduce that amiable part of our species to a just equation; and they are the only heavenly bodies whose orbits are as yet uncertain.”

The foregoing are mere glimpses of this truly great man, and are offered with a view to awakening and stimulating amongst general readers a desire for first-hand knowledge of David Hume.

W. B. R.

May 1906.

MY OWN LIFE.

It is difficult for a man to speak long of himself without vanity; therefore, I shall be short. It may be thought an instance of vanity that I pretend at all to write my life; but this narrative shall contain little more than the History of my Writings; as, indeed, almost all my life has been spent in literary pursuits and occupations. The first success of most of my writings was not such as to be an object of vanity.

I was born the 26th of April 1711, old style, at Edinburgh. I was of a good family, both by father and mother. My father's family is a branch of the Earl of Home's or Hume's; and my ancestors had been proprietors of the estate, which my brother possesses, for several generations. My mother was daughter of Sir David Falconer, President of the College of Justice; the title of Halkerton came by succession to her brother.

My family, however, was not rich; and, being myself a younger brother, my patrimony, according to the mode of my country, was of course very slender. My father, who passed for a man of parts, died when I was an infant, leaving me, with an elder brother and a sister, under the care of our mother, a ^{p-xv} woman of singular merit, who, though young and handsome, devoted herself entirely to the rearing and educating of her children. I passed through the ordinary course of education with success, and was seized very early with a passion for literature, which has been the ruling passion of my life, and the great source of my enjoyments. My studious disposition, my sobriety, and my industry gave my family a notion that the law was a proper profession for me; but I found an insurmountable aversion to everything but the pursuits of philosophy and general learning; and while they fancied I was poring upon Voet and Vinnius, Cicero and Virgil were the authors which I was secretly devouring.

My very slender fortune, however, being unsuitable to this plan of life, and my health being a little broken by my ardent application, I was tempted, or rather forced, to make a very feeble trial for entering into a more active scene of life. In 1734 I went to Bristol, with some recommendations to eminent merchants, but in a few months found that scene totally unsuitable to me. I went over to France, with a view of prosecuting my studies in a country retreat, and I there laid that plan of life which I have steadily and

successfully pursued. I resolved to make a very rigid frugality supply my deficiency of fortune, to maintain unimpaired my independency, and to regard every object as contemptible except the improvement of my talents in literature.

During my retreat in France, first at Rheims, but chiefly at La Fleche, in Anjou, I composed my *Treatise of Human Nature*. After passing three years very agreeably in that country, I came over to London in 1737. In the end of 1738 I published my *Treatise*, and immediately went down to my mother and my brother, who lived at his country-house, and was employing himself very judiciously and successfully in the improvement of his fortune.

Never literary attempt was more unfortunate than my *Treatise of Human Nature*. It fell *dead-born from the press*, without reaching such distinction as even to excite a murmur among the zealots. But being naturally of a cheerful and ^{p-xvi} sanguine temper, I very soon recovered the blow, and prosecuted with great ardour my studies in the country. In 1742 I printed at Edinburgh the first part of my *Essays*: the work was favourably received, and soon made me entirely forget my former disappointment. I continued with my mother and brother in the country, and in that time recovered the knowledge of the Greek language, which I had too much neglected in my early youth.

In 1745 I received a letter from the Marquis of Annandale, inviting me to come and live with him in England; I found also that the friends and family of that young nobleman were desirous of putting him under my care and direction, for the state of his mind and health required it. I lived with him a twelvemonth. My appointments during that time made a considerable accession to my small fortune. I then received an invitation from General St. Clair to attend him as a secretary to his expedition, which was at first meant against Canada, but ended in an incursion on the coast of France. Next year—to wit, 1747—I received an invitation from the General to attend him in the same station in his military embassy to the courts of Vienna and Turin. I then wore the uniform of an officer, and was introduced at these courts as aide-de-camp to the General, along with Sir Harry Erskine and Captain Grant, now General Grant. These two years were almost the only interruptions which my studies have received during the course of my life. I passed them agreeably, and in good company; and my appointments, with my frugality, had made me reach a fortune, which I called

independent, though most of my friends were inclined to smile when I said so; in short, I was now master of near a thousand pounds.

I had always entertained a notion that my want of success in publishing the *Treatise of Human Nature* had proceeded more from the manner than the matter, and that I had been guilty of a very usual indiscretion in going to the press too *early*. I, therefore, cast the first part of that work anew in the *Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*, which was published while I was at Turin. But this piece was at first little more successful {p-xvii} than the *Treatise of Human Nature*. On my return from Italy, I had the mortification to find all England in a ferment on account of Dr. Middleton's *Free Inquiry*, while my performance was entirely overlooked and neglected. A new edition, which had been published at London, of my *Essays, Moral and Political*, met not with a much better reception.

Such is the force of natural temper, that these disappointments made little or no impression on me. I went down in 1749 and lived two years with my brother at his country-house, for my mother was now dead. I there composed the second part of my *Essays*, which I called *Political Discourses*, and also my *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, which is another part of my *Treatise* that I cast anew. Meanwhile, my bookseller, A. Millar, informed me that my former publications (all but the unfortunate *Treatise*) were beginning to be the subject of conversation; that the sale of them was gradually increasing, and that new editions were demanded. Answers by Reverends and Right Reverends came out two or three in a year; and I found, by Dr. Warburton's railing, that the books were beginning to be esteemed in good company. However, I had a fixed resolution, which I inflexibly maintained, never to reply to anybody; and not being very irascible in my temper, I have easily kept myself clear of all literary squabbles. These symptoms of a rising reputation gave me encouragement, as I was ever more disposed to see the favourable than unfavourable side of things; a turn of mind which it is more happy to possess than to be born to an estate of ten thousand a year.

In 1751 I removed from the country to the town, the true scene for a man of letters. In 1752 were published at Edinburgh, where I then lived, my *Political Discourses*, the only work of mine that was successful on the first publication. It was well received abroad and at home. In the same year was published at London my *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*; which, in my own opinion (who ought not to judge on that subject), is of all

my writings, historical, philosophical, or literary, incomparably the best. It came unnoticed and unobserved into the world. {p-xviii}

In 1752 the Faculty of Advocates chose me their Librarian, an office from which I received little or no emolument, but which gave me the command of a large library. I then formed the plan of writing the *History of England*; but being frightened with the notion of continuing a narrative through a period of seventeen hundred years, I commenced with the accession of the House of Stuart, an epoch when, I thought, the misrepresentations of faction began chiefly to take place. I was, I own, sanguine in my expectations of the success of this work. I thought that I was the only historian that had at once neglected present power, interest, and authority, and the cry of popular prejudices; and as the subject was suited to every capacity, I expected proportional applause. But miserable was my disappointment: I was assailed by one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation; English, Scotch, and Irish, Whig and Tory, Churchman and Sectary, Freethinker and Religionist, Patriot and Courtier, united in their rage against the man who had presumed to shed a generous tear for the fate of Charles I. and the Earl of Strafford; and after the first ebullitions of their fury were over, what was still more mortifying, the book seemed to sink into oblivion. Mr. Millar told me that in a twelvemonth, he sold only forty-five copies of it. I scarcely, indeed, heard of one man in the three kingdoms, considerable for rank or letters, that could endure the book. I must only except the Primate of England, Dr. Herring, and the Primate of Ireland, Dr. Stone, which seem two odd exceptions. These dignified prelates separately sent me messages not to be discouraged.

I was, however, I confess, discouraged; and had not the war been at that time breaking out between France and England, I had certainly retired to some provincial town of the former kingdom, have changed my name, and never more have returned to my native country. But as this scheme was not now practicable, and the subsequent volume was considerably advanced, I resolved to pick up courage, and to persevere.

In this interval I published at London my *Natural History of Religion*, along with some other small pieces. Its public entry was rather obscure, except only that Dr. Hurd wrote a {p-xix} pamphlet against it, with all the illiberal petulance, arrogance, and scurrility which distinguish the Warburtonian school. This pamphlet gave me some consolation for the otherwise indifferent reception of my performance.

In 1756, two years after the fall of the first volume, was published the second volume of my *History*, containing the period from the death of Charles I. till the Revolution. This performance happened to give less displeasure to the Whigs, and was better received. It not only rose itself, but helped to buoy up its unfortunate brother.

But though I had been taught, by experience, that the Whig party were in possession of bestowing all places, both in the State and in literature, I was so little inclined to yield to their senseless clamour, that in about a hundred alterations which further study, reading, or reflection engaged me to make in the reigns of the two first Stuarts, I have made all of them invariably to the Tory side. It is ridiculous to consider the English constitution before that period as a regular plan of liberty.

In 1759 I published my *History of the House of Tudor*. The clamour against this performance was almost equal to that against the history of the two first Stuarts. The reign of Elizabeth was particularly obnoxious. But I was now callous against the impressions of public folly, and continued very peaceably and contentedly in my retreat at Edinburgh, to finish, in two volumes, the more early part of the English History, which I gave to the public in 1761, with tolerable, and but tolerable success.

But notwithstanding this variety of winds and seasons, to which my writings had been exposed, they had still been making such advances that the copy-money given me by the booksellers much exceeded anything formerly known in England; I was become not only independent, but opulent. I retired to my native country of Scotland, determined never more to set my foot out of it; and retaining the satisfaction of never having preferred a request to one great man, or even making advances of friendship to any of them. As I was now turned of fifty, I thought of passing all the rest of my life in this {p-xx} philosophical manner, when I received, in 1763, an invitation from the Earl of Hertford, with whom I was not in the least acquainted, to attend him on his embassy to Paris, with a near prospect of being appointed Secretary to the embassy, and, in the meanwhile, of performing the functions of that office. This offer, however inviting, I at first declined, both because I was reluctant to begin connections with the great, and because I was afraid the civilities and gay company of Paris would prove disagreeable to a person of my age and humour; but on his lordship's repeating the invitation, I accepted of it. I have every reason, both

of pleasure and interest, to think myself happy in my connections with that nobleman, as well as afterwards with his brother, General Conway.

Those who have not seen the strange effects of Modes, will never imagine the reception I met with at Paris, from men and women of all ranks and stations. The more I resiled from their excessive civilities, the more I was loaded with them. There is, however, a real satisfaction in living in Paris, from the great number of sensible, knowing, and polite company with which that city abounds above all places in the universe. I thought once of settling there for life.

I was appointed Secretary to the embassy; and in summer 1765, Lord Hertford left me, being appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. I was *chargé d'affaires* till the arrival of the Duke of Richmond, towards the end of the year. In the beginning of 1766 I left Paris, and next summer went to Edinburgh, with the same view as formerly, of burying myself in a philosophical retreat. I returned to that place, not richer, but with much more money, and a much larger income, by means of Lord Hertford's friendship, than I left it; and I was desirous of trying what superfluity could produce, as I had formerly made an experiment of a competency. But in 1767 I received from Mr. Conway an invitation to be Under Secretary; and this invitation, both the character of the person and my connections with Lord Hertford prevented me from declining. I returned to Edinburgh in 1769, very opulent (for I possessed a revenue of £1000 a year), healthy, and, though somewhat stricken in years, with {p-xxi} the prospect of enjoying long my ease, and of seeing the increase of my reputation.

In spring 1775, I was struck with a disorder in my bowels, which at first gave me no alarm, but has since, as I apprehend it, become mortal and incurable. I now reckon upon a speedy dissolution. I have suffered very little pain from my disorder; and what is more strange, have, notwithstanding the great decline of my person, never suffered a moment's abatement of my spirits; insomuch, that were I to name the period of my life which I should most choose to pass over again, I might be tempted to point to this later period. I possess the same ardour as ever in study, and the same gaiety in company. I consider, besides, that a man of sixty-five, by dying, cuts off only a few years of infirmities; and though I see many symptoms of my literary reputation's breaking out at last with additional lustre, I knew that I could have but few years to enjoy it. It is difficult to be more detached from life than I am at present.

To conclude historically with my own character. I am, or rather was (for that is the style I must now use in speaking of myself, which emboldens me the more to speak my sentiments)—I was, I say, a man of mild dispositions, of command of temper, of an open, social, and cheerful humour, capable of attachment, but little susceptible of enmity, and of great moderation in all my passions. Even my love of literary fame, my ruling passion, never soured my temper, notwithstanding my frequent disappointments. My company was not unacceptable to the young and careless, as well as to the studious and literary; and as I took a particular pleasure in the company of modest women, I had no reason to be displeased with the reception I met with from them. In a word, though most men anywise eminent have found reason to complain of calumny, I never was touched, or even attacked by her baleful tooth: and though I wantonly exposed myself to the rage of both civil and religious factions, they seemed to be disarmed in my behalf of their wonted fury. My friends never had occasion to vindicate any one circumstance of my character and conduct: not {p-xxii} but that the zealots, we may well suppose, would have been glad to invent and propagate any story to my disadvantage, but they never could find any which they thought would wear the face of probability. I cannot say there is no vanity in making this funeral oration of myself, but I hope it is not a misplaced one; and this is a matter of fact which is easily cleared and ascertained.

April 18, 1776.

ADAM SMITH'S CELEBRATED ACCOUNT OF HUME'S DEATH.

“KIRKCALDY, FIFESHIRE, *Nov. 9, 1776.*

“DEAR SIR,—It is with a real, though a very melancholy pleasure, that I sit down to give you some account of the behaviour of our excellent friend, Mr. Hume, during his last illness.

“Though, in his own judgment, his disease was mortal and incurable, yet he allowed himself to be prevailed upon, by the entreaty of his friends, to try what might be the effects of a long journey. A few days before he set out he wrote that account of his own life which, together with his other papers, he has left to your care. My account, therefore, shall begin where his ends.

“He set out for London towards the end of April, and at Morpeth met with Mr. John Home and myself, who had both come down from London to see him, expecting to have found him in Edinburgh. Mr. Home returned with him, and attended him during the whole of his stay in England, with that care and attention which might be expected from a temper so perfectly friendly and affectionate. As I had written to my mother that she might expect me in Scotland, I was under the necessity of continuing my journey. His disease seemed to yield to exercise and change of air, and when he arrived in London he was apparently in much better health than when he left Edinburgh. He was advised to go to Bath to drink the waters, which appeared for some time to have so good an effect upon {p-xxiii} him that even he himself began to entertain, what he was not apt to do, a better opinion of his own health. His symptoms, however, soon returned with their usual violence, and from that moment he gave up all thoughts of recovery, but submitted with the utmost cheerfulness, and the most perfect complacency and resignation. Upon his return to Edinburgh, though he found himself much weaker, yet his cheerfulness never abated, and he continued to divert himself as usual, with correcting his own works for a new edition, and reading books of amusement, with the conversation of his friends, and, sometimes in the evening, with a party at his favourite game of whist. His cheerfulness was so great, his conversation and amusements ran so much in their usual strain that, notwithstanding all bad symptoms, many people

could not believe he was dying. ‘I shall tell your friend, Colonel Edmondstone,’ said Doctor Dundas to him one day, ‘that I left you much better, and in a fair way of recovery.’ ‘Doctor,’ said he, ‘as I believe you would not choose to tell anything but the truth, you had better tell him that I am dying as fast as my enemies, if I have any, could wish, and as easily and as cheerfully as my best friends could desire.’ Colonel Edmondstone soon afterwards came to see him, and took leave of him; and on his way home he could not forbear writing him a letter bidding him once more an eternal adieu, and applying to him, as a dying man, the beautiful French verses in which the Abbé Chaulieu, in expectation of his own death, laments his approaching separation from his friend, the Marquis de la Fare. Mr. Hume’s magnanimity and firmness were such, that his most affectionate friends knew that they hazarded nothing in talking or writing to him as to a dying man, and that, so far from being hurt by this frankness, he was rather pleased and flattered by it. I happened to come into his room while he was reading this letter, which he had just received, and which he immediately showed me. I told him that though I was sensible how very much he was weakened, and that appearances were in many respects very bad yet his cheerfulness was still so great, the spirit of life seemed still to be so very strong in him, that I could not help {p-xxiv} entertaining some faint hopes. He answered—‘Your hopes are groundless. An habitual diarrhœa of more than a year’s standing would be a very bad disease at any age: at my age it is a mortal one. When I lie down in the evening, I feel myself weaker than when I rose in the morning; and when I rise in the morning, weaker than when I lay down in the evening. I am sensible, besides, that some of my vital parts are affected, so that I must soon die.’ ‘Well,’ said I, ‘if it must be so, you have at least the satisfaction of leaving all your friends, your brother’s family in particular, in great prosperity.’ He said that he felt that satisfaction so sensibly, that when he was reading a few days before, Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Dead*, among all the excuses which are alleged to Charon for not entering readily into his boat, he could not find one that fitted him: he had no house to finish, he had no daughter to provide for, he had no enemies upon whom he wished to revenge himself. ‘I could not well imagine,’ said he, ‘what excuse I could make to Charon in order to obtain a little delay. I have done everything of consequence which I ever meant to do; and I could at no time expect to leave my relations and friends in a better situation than that in which I am now like to leave them; I therefore

have all reason to die contented.’ He then diverted himself with inventing several jocular excuses, which he supposed he might make to Charon, and with imagining the very surly answers which it might suit the character of Charon to return to them. ‘Upon further consideration,’ said he, ‘I thought I might say to him, good Charon, I have been correcting my works for a new edition; allow me a little time that I may see how the public receives the alterations.’ But Charon would answer, ‘When you have seen the effect of these, you will be for making other alterations. There will be no end of such excuses; so, honest friend, please step into the boat.’ But I might still urge, ‘Have a little patience, good Charon; I have been endeavouring to open the eyes of the public. If I live a few years longer, I may have the satisfaction of seeing the downfall of some of the prevailing systems of superstition.’ But Charon would then lose all temper and decency. ‘You loitering {p-xxv} rogue; that will not happen these many hundred years. Do you fancy I will grant you a lease for so long a term? Get into the boat this instant, you lazy, loitering rogue.’

“But though Mr. Hume always talked of his approaching dissolution with great cheerfulness, he never affected to make any parade of his magnanimity. He never mentioned the subject but when the conversation naturally led to it, and never dwelt longer upon it than the course of the conversation happened to require; it was a subject, indeed, which occurred pretty frequently, in consequence of the inquiries which his friends who came to see him naturally made concerning the state of his health. The conversation which I mentioned above, and which passed on Thursday the 8th of August, was the last except one that I ever had with him. He had now become so very weak that the company of his most intimate friends fatigued him; for his cheerfulness was still so great, his complaisance and social disposition were still so entire, that when any friend was with him he could not help talking more, and with greater exertion than suited the weakness of his body. At his own desire, therefore, I agreed to leave Edinburgh, where I was staying partly upon his account, and returned to my mother’s house here, at Kirkcaldy, upon condition that he would send for me whenever he wished to see me; the physician who saw him most frequently, Dr. Black, undertaking in the meantime to write me occasionally an account of the state of his health.

“On the 22nd of August the doctor wrote me the following letter:—

““Since my last Mr. Hume has passed his time pretty easily, but is much weaker. He sits up, goes downstairs once a day, and amuses himself with reading, but seldom sees anybody. He finds that even the conversation of his most intimate friends fatigues and oppresses him; and it is happy that he does not need it, for he is quite free from anxiety, impatience, or low spirits, and passes his time very well with the assistance of amusing books.’ {p-xxvi}

“I received the day after a letter from Mr. Hume himself, of which the following is an extract:—

““EDINBURGH, *August 23, 1776.*

““MY DEAREST FRIEND,—I am obliged to make use of my nephew’s hand in writing to you, as I do not rise to-day.

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““I go very fast to decline, and last night had a small fever, which I hoped might put a quicker period to this tedious illness; but unluckily it has, in a great measure, gone off. I cannot submit to your coming over here on my account, as it is possible for me to see you so small a part of the day, but Dr. Black can better inform you concerning the degree of strength which may from time to time remain with me. Adieu, etc.’

“Three days after I received the following letter from Dr. Black:—

““EDINBURGH, *August 26th, 1776.*

““DEAR SIR,—Yesterday, about four o’clock afternoon, Mr. Hume expired. The near approach of his death became evident in the night between Thursday and Friday, when his disease became excessive, and soon weakened him so much that he could no longer rise out of his bed. He continued to the last perfectly sensible, and free from much pain or feeling of distress. He never dropped the smallest expression of impatience, but when he had occasion to speak to the people about him always did it with affection and tenderness. I thought it improper to write to bring you over, especially as I heard that he had dictated a letter to you desiring you not to come. When he

became very weak it cost him an effort to speak, and he died in such a happy composure of mind that nothing could exceed it!’

“Thus died our most excellent and never-to-be-forgotten friend, concerning whose philosophical opinions men will, no doubt, judge variously, every one approving or condemning them according as they happen to coincide or disagree with his {p-xxvii} own; but concerning whose character and conduct there can scarce be a difference of opinion. His temper, indeed, seemed to be more happily balanced—if I may be allowed such an expression—than that perhaps of any other man I have ever known. Even in the lowest state of his fortune his great and necessary frugality never hindered him from exercising, upon proper occasions, acts both of charity and generosity. It was a frugality founded not upon avarice but upon the love of independency. The extreme gentleness of his nature never weakened either the firmness of his mind or the steadiness of his resolutions. His constant pleasantry was the genuine effusion of good-nature and good-humour tempered with delicacy and modesty, and without even the slightest tincture of malignity—so frequently the disagreeable source of what is called wit in other men. It never was the meaning of his raillery to mortify, and therefore, far from offending, it seldom failed to please and delight even those who were the object of it. To his friends—who were frequently the object of it—there was not perhaps any one of all his great and amiable qualities which contributed more to endear his conversation. And that gaiety of temper, so agreeable in society, but which is so often accompanied with frivolous and superficial qualities, was in him certainly attended with the most severe application, the most extensive learning, the greatest depth of thought, and a capacity in every respect the most comprehensive. Upon the whole, I have always considered him, both in his lifetime and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit.

“I ever am, dear sir, most affectionately yours,

“ADAM SMITH.”

✱✱ “It is a usual fallacy,” says Hume in “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” “to consider all the ages of antiquity as one period.” The dates given in the Appendix may serve as a corrective in this regard.

NOTES, INTRODUCTION.

- 1 *Life of Adam Smith*, “Great Writers” series.
- 2 *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, 1846.
- 3 See *Foundations of Political Economy*, The Walter Scott Publishing Company, Limited.
- 4 His *Treatise of Human Nature*, regarding the publication of which he wrote in 1751 to Sir Gilbert Elliot, of Minto—“I was carried away by the heat of youth and invention to publish too precipitately. So vast an undertaking, planned before I was one-and-twenty, and composed before I was twenty-five, must necessarily be very defective. I have repented my haste a hundred and a hundred times.”
- 5 Haldane, *Life of Adam Smith*, “Great Writers” series.
- 6 Hume’s view is the juster here.

HUME'S POLITICAL DISCOURSES

OF COMMERCE.

The greatest part of mankind may be divided into two classes: that of shallow thinkers, who fall short of the truth; and that of abstruse thinkers, who go beyond it. The latter class are by far the most uncommon; and I may add, by far the most useful and valuable. They suggest hints, at least, and start difficulties, which they want, perhaps, skill to pursue; but which may produce very fine discoveries, when handled by men who have a more just way of thinking. At worst, what they say is uncommon; and if it should cost some pains to comprehend it, one has, however, the pleasure of hearing something that is new. An author is little to be valued who tells us nothing but what we can learn from every coffee-house conversation.

All people of shallow thought are apt to decry even those of solid understanding, as abstruse thinkers, and metaphysicians, and refiners; and never will allow anything to be just which is beyond their own weak conceptions. There are some cases, I own, where an extraordinary refinement affords a strong presumption of falsehood, and where no reasoning is to be trusted but what is natural and easy. When a man deliberates concerning his conduct in any particular affair, and forms schemes in politics, trade, economy, or any business in life, he never ought to draw his arguments too fine, or connect too long a chain of consequences together. Something is sure to happen that will disconcert his reasoning, and produce an event different {p2} from what he expected. But when we reason upon general subjects, one may justly affirm that our speculations can scarce ever be too fine, provided they be just; and that the difference between a common man and a man of genius is chiefly seen in the shallowness or depth of the principles upon which they proceed. General reasonings seem intricate, merely because they are general; nor is it easy for the bulk of mankind to distinguish, in a great number of particulars, that

common circumstance in which they all agree, or to extract it, pure and unmixed, from the other superfluous circumstances. Every judgment or conclusion, with them, is particular. They cannot enlarge their view to those universal propositions which comprehend under them an infinite number of individuals, and include a whole science in a single theorem. Their eye is confounded with such an extensive prospect; and the conclusions derived from it, even though clearly expressed, seem intricate and obscure. But however intricate they may seem, it is certain that general principles, if just and sound, must always prevail in the general course of things, though they may fail in particular cases; and it is the chief business of philosophers to regard the general course of things. I may add that it is also the chief business of politicians; especially in the domestic government of the state, where the public good, which is, or ought to be, their object, depends on the concurrence of a multitude of cases; not, as in foreign politics, on accidents and chances, and the caprices of a few persons. This therefore makes the difference between particular deliberations and general reasonings, and renders subtlety and refinement much more suitable to the latter than to the former.

I thought this introduction necessary before the following discourses on commerce, money, interest, balance of trade, etc., where, perhaps, there will occur some principles which are uncommon, and which may seem too refined and subtle for such vulgar subjects. If false, let them be rejected; but no one ought to entertain a prejudice against them merely because they are out of the common road. {p3}

The greatness of a state, and the happiness of its subjects, however independent they may be supposed in some respects, are commonly allowed to be inseparable with regard to commerce; and as private men receive greater security in the possession of their trade and riches from the power of the public, so the public becomes powerful in proportion to the riches and extensive commerce of private men. This maxim is true in general, though I cannot forbear thinking that it may possibly admit of some exceptions, and that we often establish it with too little reserve and limitation. There may be some circumstances where the commerce, and riches, and luxury of individuals, instead of adding strength to the public, will serve only to thin its armies, and diminish its authority among the neighbouring nations. Man is a very variable being, and susceptible of many different opinions, principles, and rules of conduct. What may be true while he adheres to one

way of thinking will be found false when he has embraced an opposite set of manners and opinions.

The bulk of every state may be divided into husbandmen and manufacturers. The former are employed in the culture of the land; the latter work up the materials furnished by the former, into all the commodities which are necessary and ornamental to human life. As soon as men quit their savage state, where they live chiefly by hunting and fishing, they must fall into these two classes; though the arts of agriculture employ at first the most numerous part of the society.^[7] Time and experience improve so much these arts, that the land may easily maintain a much greater number of men than those who are immediately employed in its ^{p4} cultivation, or who furnish the more necessary manufactures to such as are so employed.

If these superfluous hands apply themselves to the finer arts, which are commonly denominated the arts of luxury, they add to the happiness of the state, since they afford to many the opportunity of receiving enjoyments with which they would otherwise have been unacquainted. But may not another scheme be proposed for the employment of these superfluous hands? May not the sovereign lay claim to them, and employ them in fleets and armies, to increase the dominions of the state abroad, and spread its fame over distant nations? It is certain that the fewer desires and wants are found in the proprietors and labourers of land, the fewer hands do they employ; and consequently the superfluities of the land, instead of maintaining tradesmen and manufacturers, may support fleets and armies to a much greater extent than where a great many arts are required to minister to the luxury of particular persons. Here therefore seems to be a kind of opposition between the greatness of the state and the happiness of the subjects. A state is never greater than when all its superfluous hands are employed in the service of the public. The ease and convenience of private persons require that these hands should be employed in their service. The one can never be satisfied but at the expense of the other. As the ambition of the sovereign must entrench on the luxury of individuals, so the luxury of individuals must diminish the force and check the ambition of the sovereign.

Nor is this reasoning merely chimerical, but is founded on history and experience. The republic of Sparta was certainly more powerful than any state now in the world, consisting of an equal number of people, and this was owing entirely to the want of commerce and luxury. The Helotes were

the labourers: the Spartans were the soldiers or gentlemen. It is evident that the labour of the Helotes could not have maintained so great a number of Spartans, had these latter lived in ease and delicacy and given employment to a great variety of trades and manufactures. The like policy {p5} may be remarked in Rome. And indeed, through all ancient history, it is observable that the smallest republics raised and maintained greater armies than states consisting of triple the number of inhabitants are able to support at present. It is computed that in all European nations the proportion between soldiers and people does not exceed one to a hundred. But we read that the city of Rome alone, with its small territory, raised and maintained, in early times, ten legions against the Latins. Athens, whose whole dominions were not larger than Yorkshire, sent to the expedition against Sicily near forty thousand men. Dionysius the elder, it is said, maintained a standing army of a hundred thousand foot and ten thousand horse, besides a large fleet of four hundred sail,[8] though his territories extended no farther than the city of Syracuse, about a third part of the island of Sicily, and some seaport towns or garrisons on the coast of Italy and Illyricum. It is true the ancient armies, in time of war, subsisted much upon plunder; but did not the enemy plunder in their turn? which was a more ruinous way of levying tax than any other that could be devised. In short, no probable reason can be assigned for the great power of the more ancient states above the modern but their want of commerce and luxury. Few artisans were maintained by the labour of the farmers, and therefore more soldiers might live upon it. Titus Livius says that Rome, in his time, would find it difficult to raise as large an army as that which, in her early days, she sent out against the Gauls and Latins. Instead of those soldiers who fought for liberty and empire in Camillus's time, there were in Augustus's days musicians, painters, cooks, players, and tailors; and if the land was equally cultivated at both periods, it is evident it could maintain equal numbers in the one profession as in the other. They added nothing to the mere necessities of life in the latter period more than in the former. {p6}

It is natural on this occasion to ask whether sovereigns may not return to the maxims of ancient policy, and consult their own interest in this respect more than the happiness of their subjects. I answer that it appears to me almost impossible; and that because ancient policy was violent, and contrary to the more natural and usual course of things. It is well known with what peculiar laws Sparta was governed, and what a prodigy that

republic is justly esteemed by every one who has considered human nature, as it has displayed itself in other nations and other ages. Were the testimony of history less positive and circumstantial, such a government would appear a mere philosophical whim or fiction, and impossible ever to be reduced to practice. And though the Roman and other ancient republics were supported on principles somewhat more natural, yet was there a very extraordinary concurrence of circumstances to make them submit to such grievous burdens. They were free states; they were small ones; and the age being martial, all the neighbouring states were continually in arms. Freedom naturally begets public spirit, especially in small states; and this public spirit, this *amor patriæ*, must increase when the public is almost in continual alarm, and men are obliged every moment to expose themselves to the greatest dangers for its defence. A continual succession of wars makes every citizen a soldier: he takes the field in his turn, and during his service is chiefly maintained by himself. And notwithstanding that his service is equivalent to a very severe tax, it is less felt by a people addicted to arms, who fight for honour and revenge more than pay, and are unacquainted with gain and industry as well as pleasure.[9] Not to mention {p7} the great equality of fortunes amongst the inhabitants of the ancient republics, where every field belonging to a different proprietor was able to maintain a family, and rendered the numbers of citizens very considerable, even without trade and manufactures.

But though the want of trade and manufactures, amongst a free and very martial people, may sometimes have no other effect than to render the public more powerful, it is certain that, in the common course of human affairs, it will have a quite contrary tendency. Sovereigns must take mankind as they find them, and cannot pretend to introduce any violent change in their principles and ways of thinking. A long course of time, with a variety of accidents and circumstances, is requisite to produce those great revolutions which so much diversify the face of human affairs. And the less natural any set of principles are which support a particular society, the more difficulty will a legislator meet with in raising and cultivating them. It is his best policy to comply with the common bent of mankind, and give it all the improvements of which it is susceptible. Now, according to the most natural course of things, industry, and arts, and trade increase the power of the sovereign as well as the happiness of the subjects; and that policy is violent which aggrandizes the public by the poverty of individuals. This will easily

appear from a few considerations, which will present to us the consequences of sloth and barbarity.

Where manufactures and mechanic arts are not cultivated, the bulk of the people must apply themselves to agriculture; and if their skill and industry increase, there {p8} must arise a great superfluity from their labour beyond what suffices to maintain them. They have no temptation, therefore, to increase their skill and industry; since they cannot exchange that superfluity for any commodities which may serve either to their pleasure or vanity. A habit of indolence naturally prevails. The greater part of the land lies uncultivated. What is cultivated yields not its utmost, for want of skill or assiduity in the farmer. If at any time the public exigencies require that great numbers should be employed in the public service, the labour of the people furnishes now no superfluities by which these numbers can be maintained. The labourers cannot increase their skill and industry on a sudden. Lands uncultivated cannot be brought into tillage for some years. The armies, meanwhile, must either make sudden and violent conquests, or disband for want of subsistence. A regular attack or defence, therefore, is not to be expected from such a people, and their soldiers must be as ignorant and unskilful as their farmers and manufacturers.

Everything in the world is purchased by labour, and our passions are the only causes of labour. When a nation abounds in manufactures and mechanic arts, the proprietors of land, as well as the farmers, study agriculture as a science, and redouble their industry and attention. The superfluity which arises from their labour is not lost, but is exchanged with the manufacturers for those commodities which men's luxury now makes them covet. By this means land furnishes a great deal more of the necessities of life than what suffices for those who cultivate it. In times of peace and tranquillity this superfluity goes to the maintenance of manufacturers, and the improvers of liberal arts. But it is easy for the public to convert many of these manufacturers into soldiers, and maintain them by that superfluity which arises from the labour of the farmers. Accordingly we find that this is the case in all civilized governments. When the sovereign raises an army, what is the consequence? He imposes a tax. This tax obliges all the people to retrench what is least necessary to their {p9} subsistence. Those who labour in such commodities must either enlist in the troops or turn themselves to agriculture, and thereby oblige some labourers to enlist for want of business. And to consider the matter abstractly,

manufactures increase the power of the state only as they store up so much labour, and that of a kind to which the public may lay claim, without depriving any one of the necessities of life. The more labour, therefore, is employed beyond mere necessities, the more powerful is any state; since the persons engaged in that labour may easily be converted to the public service. In a state without manufactures there may be the same number of hands; but there is not the same quantity of labour, nor of the same kind. All the labour is there bestowed upon necessities, which can admit of little or no abatement.

Thus the greatness of the sovereign and the happiness of the state are, in a great measure, united with regard to trade and manufactures. It is a violent method, and in most cases impracticable, to oblige the labourer to toil in order to raise from the land more than what subsists himself and family. Furnish him with manufactures and commodities, and he will do it of himself. Afterwards you will find it easy to seize some part of his superfluous labour, and employ it in the public service, without giving him his wonted return. Being accustomed to industry, he will think this less grievous than if, at once, you obliged him to an augmentation of labour without any reward. The case is the same with regard to the other members of the state. The greater is the stock of labour of all kinds, the greater quantity may be taken from the heap without making any sensible alteration upon it.

A public granary of corn, a storehouse of cloth, a magazine of arms; all these must be allowed real riches and strength in any state. Trade and industry are really nothing but a stock of labour, which, in time of peace and tranquillity, is employed for the ease and satisfaction of individuals; but in the exigencies of state, may, in part, be turned to public advantage. Could we convert a city into a kind of fortified ^{p10} camp, and infuse into each breast so martial a genius, and such a passion for public good, as to make every one willing to undergo the greatest hardships for the sake of the public, these affections might now, as in ancient times, prove alone a sufficient spur to industry, and support the community. It would then be advantageous, as in camps, to banish all arts and luxury; and, by restrictions on equipage and tables, make the provisions and forage last longer than if the army were loaded with a number of superfluous retainers. But as these principles are too disinterested and too difficult to support, it is requisite to govern men by other passions, and animate them with a spirit of avarice and

industry, art and luxury. The camp is, in this case, loaded with a superfluous retinue; but the provisions flow in proportionately larger. The harmony of the whole is still supported, and the natural bent of the mind being more complied with, individuals, as well as the public, find their account in the observance of those maxims.

The same method of reasoning will let us see the advantage of foreign commerce, in augmenting the power of the state, as well as the riches and happiness of the subjects. It increases the stock of labour in the nation, and the sovereign may convert what share of it he finds necessary to the service of the public. Foreign trade, by its imports, furnishes materials for new manufactures; and by its exports, it produces labour in particular commodities which could not be consumed at home. In short, a kingdom that has a large import and export must abound more with industry, and that employed upon delicacies and luxuries, than a kingdom which rests contented with its native commodities. It is, therefore, more powerful, as well as richer and happier. The individuals reap the benefit of these commodities, so far as they gratify the senses and appetites. And the public is also a gainer, while a greater stock of labour is, by this means, stored up against any public exigency; that is, a greater number of laborious men are maintained, who may be diverted to the public service {p11} without robbing any one of the necessities or even the chief conveniences of life.

If we consult history, we shall find that in most nations foreign trade has preceded any refinement in home manufactures, and given birth to domestic luxury. The temptation is stronger to make use of foreign commodities, which are ready for use, and which are entirely new to us, than to make improvements on any domestic commodity, which always advance by slow degrees, and never affect us by their novelty. The profit is also very great in exporting what is superfluous at home, and what bears no price, to foreign nations, whose soil or climate is not favourable to that commodity. Thus men become acquainted with the pleasures of luxury and the profits of commerce; and their delicacy and industry, being once awakened, carry them to farther improvements in every branch of domestic as well as foreign trade. And this perhaps is the chief advantage which arises from a commerce with strangers. It rouses men from their indolence; and presenting the gayer and more opulent part of the nation with objects of luxury, which they never before dreamed of, raises in them a desire of a more splendid way of life than what their ancestors enjoyed; and at the

same time the few merchants who possess the secret of this importation and exportation make exorbitant profits, and becoming rivals in wealth to the ancient nobility, tempt other adventurers to become their rivals in commerce. Imitation soon diffuses all those arts; while domestic manufacturers emulate the foreign in their improvements, and work up every home commodity to the utmost perfection of which it is susceptible. Their own steel and iron, in such laborious hands, becomes equal to the gold and rubies of the Indies.

When the affairs of the society are once brought to this situation, a nation may lose most of its foreign trade, and yet continue a great and powerful people. If strangers will not take any particular commodity of ours, we must cease to labour in it. The same hands will turn themselves towards some refinement in other commodities which may be {p12} wanted at home. And there must always be materials for them to work upon; till every person in the state, who possesses riches, enjoys as great plenty of home commodities, and those in as great perfection, as he desires; which can never possibly happen. China is represented as one of the most flourishing empires in the world, though it has very little commerce beyond its own territories.

It will not, I hope, be considered as a superfluous digression, if I here observe, that as the multitude of mechanical arts is advantageous, so is the great number of persons to whose share the productions of these arts fall. A too great disproportion among the citizens weakens any state. Every person, if possible, ought to enjoy the fruits of his labour, in a full possession of all the necessaries, and many of the conveniences of life. No one can doubt but such an equality is most suitable to human nature, and diminishes much less from the happiness of the rich than it adds to that of the poor. It also augments the power of the state, and makes any extraordinary taxes or impositions be paid with much more cheerfulness. Where the riches are engrossed by a few, these must contribute very largely to the supplying the public necessities. But when the riches are dispersed among multitudes, the burden feels light on every shoulder, and the taxes make not a very sensible difference on any one's way of living.

Add to this, that where the riches are in few hands these must enjoy all the power, and will readily conspire to lay the whole burden on the poor, and oppress them still farther, to the discouragement of all industry.

In this circumstance consists the great advantage of England above any nation at present in the world, or that appears in the records of story. It is true, the English feel some disadvantages in foreign trade by the high price of labour, which is in part the effect of the riches of their artisans, as well as of the plenty of money; but as foreign trade is not the most material circumstance, it is not to be put in competition with the happiness of so many millions. And if there were no more to endear to them that free {p13} government under which they live, this alone were sufficient. The poverty of the common people is a natural, if not an infallible effect of absolute monarchy; though I doubt whether it be always true, on the other hand, that their riches are an infallible result of liberty. Liberty must be attended with particular accidents, and a certain turn of thinking, in order to produce that effect. Lord Bacon, accounting for the great advantages obtained by the English in their wars with France, ascribes them chiefly to the superior ease and plenty of the common people amongst the former; yet the governments of the two kingdoms were, at that time, pretty much alike. Where the labourers and artisans are accustomed to work for low wages, and to retain but a small part of the fruits of their labour, it is difficult for them, even in a free government, to better their condition, or conspire among themselves to heighten their wages. But even where they are accustomed to a more plentiful way of life, it is easy for the rich, in a despotic government, to conspire against them, and throw the whole burden of the taxes on their shoulders.

It may seem an odd position, that the poverty of the common people in France, Italy, and Spain is, in some measure, owing to the superior riches of the soil and happiness of the climate; and yet there want not many reasons to justify this paradox. In such a fine mould or soil as that of those more southern regions, agriculture is an easy art; and one man, with a couple of sorry horses, will be able, in a season, to cultivate as much land as will pay a pretty considerable rent to the proprietor. All the art, which the farmer knows, is to leave his ground fallow for a year, so soon as it is exhausted; and the warmth of the sun alone and temperature of the climate enrich it, and restore its fertility. Such poor peasants, therefore, require only a simple maintenance for their labour. They have no stock nor riches, which claim more; and at the same time, they are for ever dependent on their landlord, who gives no leases, nor fears that his land will be spoiled by the ill methods of cultivation. In England, the land is rich, but {p14} coarse; must be

cultivated at a great expense; and produces slender crops, when not carefully managed, and by a method which gives not the full profit but in a course of several years. A farmer, therefore, in England must have a considerable stock and a long lease; which beget proportional profits. The fine vineyards of Champagne and Burgundy, that oft yield to the landlord above five pounds per acre, are cultivated by peasants who have scarce bread; and the reason is, that such peasants need no stock but their own limbs, with instruments of husbandry which they can buy for twenty shillings. The farmers are commonly in some better circumstances in those countries; but the graziers are most at their ease of all those who cultivate the land. The reason is still the same. Men must have profits proportionable to their expense and hazard. Where so considerable a number of labouring poor as the peasants and farmers are in very low circumstances, all the rest must partake of their poverty whether the government of that nation be monarchical or republican.

We may form a similar remark with regard to the general history of mankind. What is the reason why no people living between the tropics could ever yet attain to any art or civility, or reach even any police in their government, and any military discipline; while few nations in the temperate climates have been altogether deprived of these advantages? It is probable that one cause of this phenomenon is the warmth and equality of weather in the torrid zone, which render clothes and houses less requisite for the inhabitants, and thereby remove, in part, that necessity which is the great spur to industry and invention. *Curis acuens mortalia corda*. Not to mention that the fewer goods or possessions of this kind any people enjoy, the fewer quarrels are likely to arise amongst them, and the less necessity will there be for a settled police or regular authority to protect and defend them from foreign enemies, or from each other.

NOTES, OF COMMERCE.

7 Monsieur Melon, in his political essay on commerce, asserts that even at present, if you divide France into twenty parts, sixteen are labourers or peasants, two only artisans, one belonging to the law, church, and military, and one merchants, financiers, and bourgeois. This calculation is certainly very erroneous. In France, England, and indeed most parts of Europe, half of the inhabitants live in cities; and even of those who live in the country, a very great number are artisans, perhaps above a third.

8 *Diod. Sic.*, lib. 2. This account, I own, is somewhat suspicious, not to say worse, chiefly because this army was not composed of citizens, but of mercenary forces.

9 The more ancient Romans lived in perpetual war with all their neighbours; and in old Latin the term “hostis” expressed both a stranger and an enemy. This is remarked by Cicero; but by him is ascribed to the humanity of his ancestors, who softened, as much as possible, the denomination of an enemy by calling him by the same appellation which signified a stranger. (*De Off.*, lib. 2.) It is, however, much more probable, from the manners of the times, that the ferocity of those people was so great as to make them regard all strangers as enemies, and call them by the same name. It is not, besides, consistent with the most common maxims of policy or of nature that any state should regard its public enemies with a friendly eye, or preserve any such sentiments for them as the Roman orator would ascribe to his ancestors. Not to mention that the early Romans really exercised piracy, as we learn from their first treaties with Carthage, preserved by Polybius, lib. 3, and consequently, like the Sallee and Algerine rovers, were actually at war with most nations, and a stranger and an enemy were with them almost synonymous.

OF REFINEMENT IN THE ARTS.

Luxury is a word of a very uncertain signification, and may be taken in a good as well as in a bad sense. In general, it means great refinement in the gratification of the senses, and any degree of it may be innocent or blameable, according to the age, or country, or condition of the person. The bounds between the virtue and the vice cannot here be fixed exactly, more than in other moral subjects. To imagine that the gratifying any of the senses, or the indulging any delicacy in meats, drinks, or apparel, is in itself a vice, can never enter into a head that is not disordered by the frenzies of enthusiasm. I have, indeed, heard of a monk abroad who, because the windows of his cell opened upon a very noble prospect, made a covenant with his eyes never to turn that way, or receive so sensual a gratification. And such is the crime of drinking champagne or burgundy, preferably to small beer or porter. These indulgences are only vices when they are pursued at the expense of some virtue, as liberality or charity; in like manner as they are follies when for them a man ruins his fortune, and reduces himself to want and beggary. Where they entrench upon no virtue, but leave ample subject whence to provide for friends, family, and every proper object of generosity or compassion, they are entirely innocent, and have in every age been acknowledged such by almost all moralists. To be entirely occupied with the luxury of the table, for instance, without any relish for the pleasures of ambition, study, or conversation, is a mark of gross stupidity, and is incompatible with any vigour of temper or genius. To confine one's expense entirely to such a gratification, without regard to friends or family, is an indication of a heart entirely devoid of humanity or benevolence. But if a man reserve time sufficient for all laudable pursuits, and money sufficient for all generous {p16} purposes, he is free from every shadow of blame or reproach.

Since luxury may be considered either as innocent or blameable, one may be surprised at those preposterous opinions which have been

entertained concerning it; while men of libertine principles bestow praises even on vicious luxury, and represent it as highly advantageous to society; and on the other hand, men of severe morals blame even the most innocent luxury, and regard it as the source of all the corruptions, disorders, and factions incident to civil government. We shall here endeavour to correct both these extremes, by proving, first, that the ages of refinement are both the happiest and most virtuous; secondly, that wherever luxury ceases to be innocent, it also ceases to be beneficial; and when carried a degree too far, is a quality pernicious, though perhaps not the most pernicious, to political society.

To prove the first point, we need but consider the effects of refinement both on private and on public life. Human happiness, according to the most received notions, seems to consist in three ingredients: action, pleasure, and indolence; and though these ingredients ought to be mixed in different proportions, according to the particular dispositions of the person, yet no one ingredient can be entirely wanting without destroying, in some measure, the relish of the whole composition. Indolence or repose, indeed, seems not of itself to contribute much to our enjoyment; but, like sleep, is requisite as an indulgence to the weakness of human nature, which cannot support an uninterrupted course of business or pleasure. That quick march of the spirits which takes a man from himself, and chiefly gives satisfaction, does in the end exhaust the mind, and requires some intervals of repose, which, though agreeable for a moment, yet, if prolonged, beget a languor and lethargy that destroy all enjoyment. Education, custom, and example have a mighty influence in turning the mind to any of these pursuits; and it must be owned, that where they promote a relish for action and pleasure, they are so far favourable {p17} to human happiness. In times when industry and arts flourish, men are kept in perpetual occupation, and enjoy, as their reward, the occupation itself, as well as those pleasures which are the fruits of their labour. The mind acquires new vigour; enlarges its powers and faculties; and by an assiduity in honest industry, both satisfies its natural appetites and prevents the growth of unnatural ones, which commonly spring up when nourished with ease and idleness. Banish those arts from society, you deprive men both of action and of pleasure; and leaving nothing but indolence in their place, you even destroy the relish of indolence, which never is agreeable but when it succeeds to labour, and recruits the spirits, exhausted by too much application and fatigue.

Another advantage of industry and of refinements in the mechanical arts is that they commonly produce some refinements in the liberal; nor can the one be carried to perfection without being accompanied, in some degree, with the other. The same age which produces great philosophers and politicians, renowned generals and poets, usually abounds with skilful weavers and ship-carpenters. We cannot reasonably expect that a piece of woollen cloth will be wrought to perfection in a nation which is ignorant of astronomy, or where ethics are neglected. The spirit of the age affects all the arts; and the minds of men, being once roused from their lethargy and put into a fermentation, turn themselves on all sides, and carry improvements into every art and science. Profound ignorance is totally banished, and men enjoy the privilege of rational creatures, to think as well as to act, to cultivate the pleasures of the mind as well as those of the body.

The more these refined arts advance, the more sociable do men become; nor is it possible that, when enriched with science and possessed of a fund of conversation, they should be contented to remain in solitude, or live with their fellow-citizens in that distant manner which is peculiar to ignorant and barbarous nations. They flock into cities; love to receive and communicate knowledge; to show their ^{p18} wit or their breeding; their taste in conversation or living, in clothes or furniture. Curiosity allures the wise; vanity the foolish; and pleasure both. Particular clubs and societies are everywhere formed, both sexes meet in an easy and sociable manner, and the tempers of men, as well as their behaviour, refine apace. So that, besides the improvements which they receive from knowledge and the liberal arts, it is impossible but they must feel an increase of humanity from the very habit of conversing together and contributing to each other's pleasure and entertainment. Thus industry, knowledge, and humanity are linked together by an indissoluble chain, and are found, from experience as well as reason, to be peculiar to the more polished, and, what are commonly denominated, the more luxurious ages.

Nor are these advantages attended with disadvantages which bear any proportion to them. The more men refine upon pleasure the less will they indulge in excesses of any kind, because nothing is more destructive to true pleasure than such excesses. One may safely affirm that the Tartars are oftener guilty of beastly gluttony when they feast on their dead horses than European courtiers with all their refinements of cookery. And if libertine love, or even infidelity to the marriage-bed, be more frequent in polite ages,

when it is often regarded only as a piece of gallantry, drunkenness, on the other hand, is much less common—a vice more odious and more pernicious both to mind and body. And in this matter I would appeal not only to an Ovid or a Petronius, but to a Seneca or a Cato. We know that Cæsar, during Catiline's conspiracy, being necessitated to put into Cato's hands a *billet-doux* which discovered an intrigue with Servilia, Cato's own sister, that stern philosopher threw it back to him with indignation, and, in the bitterness of his wrath, gave him the appellation of drunkard, as a term more opprobrious than that with which he could more justly have reproached him.

But industry, knowledge, and humanity are not advantageous in private life alone; they diffuse their beneficial ^{p19} influence on the public, and render the government as great and flourishing as they make individuals happy and prosperous. The increase and consumption of all the commodities which serve to the ornament and pleasure of life are advantageous to society, because at the same time that they multiply those innocent gratifications to individuals, they are a kind of storehouse of labour, which, in the exigencies of state, may be turned to the public service. In a nation where there is no demand for such superfluities men sink into indolence, lose all the enjoyment of life, and are useless to the public, which cannot maintain nor support its fleets and armies from the industries of such slothful members.

The bounds of all the European kingdoms are at present pretty near the same they were two hundred years ago; but what a difference is there in the power and grandeur of those kingdoms! Which can be ascribed to nothing but the increase of art and industry. When Charles VIII. of France invaded Italy, he carried with him about 20,000 men; and yet this armament so exhausted the nation, as we learn from Guicciardin, that for some years it was not able to make so great an effort. The late King of France, in time of war, kept in pay above 400,000 men,^[10] though from Mazarin's death to his own he was engaged in a course of wars that lasted near thirty years.

This industry is much promoted by the knowledge inseparable from the ages of art and refinement; as, on the other hand, this knowledge enables the public to make the best advantage of the industry of its subjects. Laws, order, police, discipline—these can never be carried to any degree of perfection before human reason has refined itself by exercise, and by an application to the more vulgar arts, at least, of commerce and manufactures.

Can we expect that a government will be well modelled by a people who know not how to make a spinning-wheel, or to employ a loom to advantage? Not to mention that all ignorant ages {p20} are infested with superstition, which throws the government off its bias, and disturbs men in the pursuit of their interest and happiness.

Knowledge in the arts of government naturally begets mildness and moderation, by instructing men in the advantages of humane maxims above rigour and severity, which drive subjects into rebellion, and render the return to submission impracticable, by cutting off all hopes of pardon. When the tempers of men are softened as well as their knowledge improved, this humanity appears still more conspicuous, and is the chief characteristic which distinguishes a civilized age from times of barbarity and ignorance. Factions are then less inveterate, revolutions less tragical, authority less severe, and seditions less frequent. Even foreign wars abate of their cruelty; and after the field of battle, where honour and interest steel men against compassion as well as fear, the combatants divest themselves of the brute, and resume the man.

Nor need we fear that men, by losing their ferocity, will lose their martial spirit, or become less undaunted and vigorous in defence of their country or their liberty. The arts have no such effect in enervating either the mind or body. On the contrary, industry, their inseparable attendant, adds new force to both. And if anger, which is said to be the whetstone of courage, loses somewhat of its asperity by politeness and refinement, a sense of honour, which is a stronger, more constant, and more governable principle, acquires fresh vigour by that elevation of genius which arises from knowledge and a good education. Add to this that courage can neither have any duration nor be of any use when not accompanied with discipline and martial skill, which are seldom found among a barbarous people. The ancients remarked that Datames was the only barbarian that ever knew the art of war. And Pyrrhus, seeing the Romans marshal their army with some art and skill, said with surprise, "These barbarians have nothing barbarous in their discipline!" It is observable that as the old Romans, by applying themselves solely to war, were the {p21} only uncivilized people that ever possessed military discipline, so the Italians are the only civilized people among Europeans that ever wanted courage and a martial spirit. Those who would ascribe this effeminacy of the Italians to their luxury or politeness, or application to the arts, need but consider the French and English, whose

bravery is as incontestable as their love for luxury and their assiduity in commerce. The Italian historians give us a more satisfactory reason for this degeneracy of their countrymen. They show us how the sword was dropped at once by all the Italian sovereigns; while the Venetian aristocracy was jealous of its subjects, the Florentine democracy applied itself entirely to commerce; Rome was governed by priests, and Naples by women. War then became the business of soldiers of fortune, who spared one another, and, to the astonishment of the world, could engage a whole day in what they called a battle, and return at night to their camp without the least bloodshed.

What has chiefly induced severe moralists to declaim against refinement in the arts is the example of ancient Rome, which, joining to its poverty and rusticity, virtue and public spirit, rose to such a surprising height of grandeur and liberty; but having learned from its conquered provinces the Asiatic luxury, fell into every kind of corruption, whence arose sedition and civil wars, attended at last with the total loss of liberty. All the Latin classics, whom we peruse in our infancy, are full of these sentiments, and universally ascribe the ruin of their state to the arts and riches imported from the East: insomuch that Sallust represents a taste for painting as a vice no less than lewdness and drinking. And so popular were these sentiments during the latter ages of the republic, that this author abounds in praises of the old rigid Roman virtue, though himself the most egregious instance of modern luxury and corruption; speaks contemptuously of the Grecian eloquence, though the most eloquent writer in the world; nay, employs preposterous digressions and declamations to this purpose, though a model of taste and correctness. {p22}

But it would be easy to prove that these writers mistook the cause of the disorders in the Roman state, and ascribed to luxury and the arts what really proceeded from an ill-modelled government and the unlimited extent of conquests. Refinement on the pleasures and conveniences of life has no natural tendency to beget venality and corruption. The value which all men put upon any particular pleasure depends on comparison and experience; nor is a porter less greedy of money, which he spends on bacon and brandy, than a courtier, who purchases champagne and ortolans. Riches are valuable at all times, and to all men, because they always purchase pleasures such as men are accustomed to and desire; nor can anything restrain or regulate the love of money but a sense of honour and virtue, which, if it be not nearly

equal at all times, will naturally abound most in ages of knowledge and refinement.

Of all European kingdoms, Poland seems the most defective in the arts of war, as well as peace, mechanical as well as liberal; and yet it is there that venality and corruption do most prevail. The nobles seem to have preserved their crown elective for no other purpose but regularly to sell it to the highest bidder; this is almost the only species of commerce with which that people are acquainted.

The liberties of England, so far from decaying since the improvements in the arts, have never flourished so much as during that period. And though corruption may seem to increase of late years, this is chiefly to be ascribed to our established liberty, when our princes have found the impossibility of governing without parliaments, or of terrifying parliaments by the phantom of prerogative. Not to mention that this corruption or venality prevails infinitely more among the electors than the elected, and therefore cannot justly be ascribed to any refinements in luxury.

If we consider the matter in a proper light, we shall find that improvements in the arts are rather favourable to liberty, and have a natural tendency to preserve, if not {p23} produce a free government. In rude, unpolished nations, where the arts are neglected, all the labour is bestowed on the cultivation of the ground; and the whole society is divided into two classes—proprieters of land and their vassals or tenants. The latter are necessarily dependent, and fitted for slavery and subjection; especially where they possess no riches, and are not valued for their knowledge in agriculture, as must always be the case where the arts are neglected. The former naturally erect themselves into petty tyrants, and must either submit to an absolute master for the sake of peace and order, or if they will preserve their independency, like the ancient barons, they must fall into feuds and contests among themselves, and throw the whole society into such confusion as is perhaps worse than the most despotic government. But where luxury nourishes commerce and industry, the peasants, by a proper cultivation of the land, become rich and independent; while the tradesmen and merchants acquire a share of the property, and draw authority and consideration to that middling rank of men, who are the best and firmest basis of public liberty. These submit not to slavery, like the poor peasants, from poverty and meanness of spirit; and having no hopes of tyrannizing over others, like the barons, they are not tempted, for the sake of that

gratification, to submit to the tyranny of their sovereign. They covet equal laws, which may secure their property, and preserve them from monarchical as well as aristocratical tyranny.

The House of Commons is the support of our popular government, and all the world acknowledges that it owed its chief influence and consideration to the increase of commerce, which threw such a balance of property into the hands of the commons. How inconsistent then is it to blame so violently a refinement in the arts, and to represent it as the bane of liberty and public spirit!

To declaim against present times, and magnify the virtue of remote ancestors, is a propensity almost inherent in human nature: and as the sentiments and opinions of civilized ages alone are transmitted to posterity, hence it is {p24} that we meet with so many severe judgments pronounced against luxury, and even science; and hence it is that at present we give so ready an assent to them. But the fallacy is easily perceived from comparing different nations that are contemporaries, where we both judge more impartially and can better set in opposition those manners with which we are sufficiently acquainted. Treachery and cruelty, the most pernicious and most odious of all vices, seem peculiar to uncivilized ages; and by the refined Greeks and Romans were ascribed to all the barbarous nations which surrounded them. They might justly, therefore, have presumed that their own ancestors, so highly celebrated, possessed no greater virtue, and were as much inferior to their posterity in honour and humanity as in taste and science. An ancient Frank or Saxon may be highly extolled; but I believe every man would think his life or fortune much less secure in the hands of a Moor or Tartar than in those of a French or English gentleman, the rank of men the most civilized in the most civilized nations.

We come now to the second position which we proposed to illustrate—viz., that as innocent luxury, or a refinement in the arts and conveniences of life, is advantageous to the public, so, wherever luxury ceases to be innocent, it also ceases to be beneficial; and when carried a degree farther, begins to be a quality pernicious, though perhaps not the most pernicious, to political society.

Let us consider what we call vicious luxury. No gratification, however sensual, can of itself be esteemed vicious. A gratification is only vicious when it engrosses all a man's expense, and leaves no ability for such acts of duty and generosity as are required by his situation and fortune. Suppose

that he correct the vice, and employ part of his expense in the education of his children, in the support of his friends, and in relieving the poor, would any prejudice result to society? On the contrary, the same consumption would arise, and that labour which at present is employed only in producing a slender gratification to one man, would relieve the necessitous, and bestow satisfaction on hundreds. {p25} The same care and toil which raise a dish of peas at Christmas would give bread to a whole family during six months. To say that, without a vicious luxury, the labour would not have been employed at all, is only to say that there is some other defect in human nature, such as indolence, selfishness, inattention to others, for which luxury in some measure provides a remedy, as one poison may be an antidote to another. But virtue, like wholesome food, is better than poisons, however corrected.

Suppose the same number of men that are at present in Britain, with the same soil and climate: I ask, is it not possible for them to be happier, by the most perfect way of life which can be imagined, and by the greatest reformation which Omnipotence itself could work in their temper and disposition? To assert that they cannot appears evidently ridiculous. As the land is able to maintain more than all its inhabitants, they could never, in such a Utopian state, feel any other ills than those which arise from bodily sickness; and these are not the half of human miseries. All other ills spring from some vice, either in ourselves or others; and even many of our diseases proceed from the same origin. Remove the vices, and the ills follow. You must only take care to remove all the vices. If you remove part, you may render the matter worse. By banishing vicious luxury, without curing sloth and an indifference to others, you only diminish industry in the state, and add nothing to men's charity or their generosity. Let us, therefore, rest contented with asserting that two opposite vices in a state may be more advantageous than either of them alone; but let us never pronounce vice in itself advantageous. Is it not very inconsistent for an author to assert in one page that moral distinctions are inventions of politicians for public interest, and in the next page maintain that vice is advantageous to the public?[\[11\]](#) And indeed it seems, upon any system of morality, little less than a contradiction in terms to talk of a vice which is in general beneficial to society. {p26}

Prodigality is not to be confounded with a refinement in the arts. It even appears that that vice is much less frequent in the cultivated ages. Industry

and gain beget frugality, among the lower and middle ranks of men, and in all the busy professions. Men of high rank, indeed, it may be pretended, are more allured by the pleasures, which become more frequent. But idleness is the great source of prodigality at all times, and there are pleasures and vanities in every age, which allure men equally when they are unacquainted with better enjoyments. Not to mention that the high interest paid in rude times quickly consumes the fortunes of the landed gentry, and multiplies their necessities.

I thought this reasoning necessary in order to give some light to a philosophical question which has been much disputed in Britain. I call it a philosophical question, not a political one; for whatever may be the consequence of such a miraculous transformation of mankind as would endow them with every species of virtue and free them from every species of vice, this concerns not the magistrate, who aims only at possibilities. He cannot cure every vice by substituting a virtue in its place. Very often he can only cure one vice by another, and in that case he ought to prefer what is least pernicious to society. Luxury, when excessive, is the source of many ills; but it is in general preferable to sloth and idleness, which would commonly succeed in its place, and are more pernicious both to private persons and to the public. When sloth reigns, a mean, uncultivated way of life prevails amongst individuals, without society, without enjoyment. And if the sovereign, in such a situation, demands the service of his subjects, the labour of the state suffices only to furnish the necessaries of life to the labourers, and can afford nothing to those who are employed in the public service.

NOTES, OF REFINEMENT IN THE ARTS.

10 The inscription on the Place de Vendôme says 440,000.

11 *Fable of the Bees.*

OF MONEY.

Money is not, properly speaking, one of the subjects of commerce, but only the instrument which men have agreed upon to facilitate the exchange of one commodity for another. It is none of the wheels of trade; it is the oil which renders the motion of the wheels more smooth and easy. If we consider any one kingdom by itself, it is evident that the greater or less plenty of money is of no consequence, since the prices of commodities are always proportioned to the plenty of money, and a crown in Henry VII.'s time served the same purpose as a pound does at present. It is only the public which draws any advantage from the greater plenty of money, and that only in its wars and negotiations with foreign states. And this is the reason why all rich and trading countries, from Carthage to Britain and Holland, have employed mercenary troops, which they hired from their poorer neighbours. Were they to make use of their native subjects, they would find less advantage from their superior riches, and from their great plenty of gold and silver, since the pay of all their servants must rise in proportion to the public opulence. Our small army in Britain of 20,000 men is maintained at as great expense as a French army thrice as numerous. The English fleet, during the late war, required as much money to support it as all the Roman legions which kept the whole world in subjection during the time of the emperors.^[12] {p28}

The greater number of people and their greater industry are serviceable in all cases—at home and abroad, in private and in public. But the greater plenty of money is very limited in its use, and may even sometimes be a loss to a nation in its commerce with foreigners.

There seems to be a happy concurrence of causes in human affairs which checks the growth of trade and riches, and hinders them from being confined entirely to one people, as might naturally at first be dreaded from the advantages of an established commerce. Where one nation has got the start of another in trade it is very difficult for the latter to regain the ground

it has lost, because of the superior industry and skill of the former, and the greater stocks of which its merchants are possessed, and which enable them to trade for so much smaller profits. But these advantages are compensated, in some measure, by the low price of labour in every nation which has not an extensive commerce, and does not very much abound in gold and silver. Manufactures, therefore, gradually shift their places, leaving those countries and provinces which they have already enriched, and flying to others, whither they are allured by the cheapness of provisions and labour, till they have enriched these also and are again banished by the same causes. And, in general, we may observe that the dearness of everything, from plenty of money, is a disadvantage which attends an established commerce, and sets bounds to it in every country by enabling the poorer states to under-sell the richer in all foreign markets. {p29}

This has made me entertain a great doubt concerning the benefit of banks and paper-credit, which are so generally esteemed advantageous to every nation. That provisions and labour should become dear by the increase of trade and money is, in many respects, an inconvenience; but an inconvenience that is unavoidable, and the effect of that public wealth and prosperity which are the end of all our wishes. It is compensated by the advantages which we reap from the possession of these precious metals, and the weight which they give the nation in all foreign wars and negotiations. But there appears no reason for increasing that inconvenience by a counterfeit money, which foreigners will not accept in any payment, and which any great disorder in the state will reduce to nothing. There are, it is true, many people in every rich state who, having large sums of money, would prefer paper with good security, as being of more easy transport and more safe custody. If the public provide not a bank, private bankers will take advantage of this circumstance; as the goldsmiths formerly did in London, or as the bankers do at present in Dublin; and therefore it is better, it may be thought, that a public company should enjoy the benefit of the paper-credit which always will have place in every opulent kingdom. But to endeavour artificially to increase such a credit can never be the interest of any trading nation; but must lay them under disadvantages, by increasing money beyond its natural proportion to labour and commodities, and thereby heightening their price to the merchant and manufacturer. And in this view, it must be allowed that no bank could be more advantageous than such a one as locked up all the money it received,[\[13\]](#) and never augmented

the circulating coin, as is usual, by returning part of its treasure into commerce. A public bank by this expedient might cut off much of the dealings of private bankers and money-jobbers; and though the state bore the charge of salaries to the directors and tellers of this bank (for, according to the preceding {p30} supposition, it would have no profit from its dealings), the national advantage, resulting from the low price of labour and the destruction of paper-credit, would be a sufficient compensation. Not to mention that so large a sum, lying ready at command, would be a great convenience in times of public danger and distress; and what part of it was used might be replaced at leisure, when peace and tranquillity were restored to the nation.

But of this subject of paper-credit we shall treat more largely hereafter, and I shall finish this essay on money by proposing and explaining two observations, which may perhaps serve to employ the thoughts of our speculative politicians, for to these only I all along address myself. It is enough that I submit to the ridicule sometimes in this age attached to the character of a philosopher, without adding to it that which belongs to a projector.

It was a shrewd observation of Anacharsis the Scythian, who had never seen money in his own country, that gold and silver seemed to him of no use to the Greeks but to assist them in numeration and arithmetic. It is indeed evident that money is nothing but the representation of labour and commodities, and serves only as a method of rating or estimating them. Where coin is in greater plenty, as a greater quantity of it is required to represent the same quantity of goods, it can have no effect, either good or bad, taking a nation within itself; no more than it would make any alteration on a merchant's books if, instead of the Arabian method of notation, which requires few characters, he should make use of the Roman, which requires a great many. Nay, the greater quantity of money, like the Roman characters, is rather inconvenient, and requires greater trouble both to keep and transport it. But notwithstanding this conclusion, which must be allowed just, it is certain that since the discovery of mines in America industry has increased in all the nations of Europe, except in the possessors of those mines; and this may justly be ascribed, amongst other reasons, to the increase of gold and silver. Accordingly, we find that in every kingdom into which {p31} money begins to flow in greater abundance than formerly everything takes a new face; labour and industry gain life, the merchant

becomes more enterprising, the manufacturer more diligent and skilful, and even the farmer follows his plough with greater alacrity and attention. This is not easily to be accounted for, if we consider only the influence which a greater abundance of coin has in the kingdom itself, by heightening the price of commodities, and obliging every one to pay a greater number of these little yellow or white pieces for everything he purchases. And as to foreign trade, it appears that great plenty of money is rather disadvantageous, by raising the price of every kind of labour.

To account, then, for this phenomenon, we must consider that though the high price of commodities be a necessary consequence of the increase of gold and silver, yet it follows not immediately upon that increase; but some time is required before the money circulates through the whole state, and makes its effects be felt on all ranks of people. At first, no alteration is perceived; by degrees the price rises, first of one commodity then of another, till the whole at last reaches a just proportion with the new quantity of specie which is in the kingdom. In my opinion, it is only in this interval or intermediate situation, between the acquisition of money and rise of prices, that the increasing quantity of gold and silver is favourable to industry. When any quantity of money is imported into a nation, it is not at first dispersed into many hands, but is confined to the coffers of a few persons, who immediately seek to employ it to the best advantage. Here are a set of manufacturers or merchants, we shall suppose, who have received returns of gold and silver for goods which they sent to Cadiz. They are thereby enabled to employ more workmen than formerly, who never dream of demanding higher wages, but are glad of employment from such good paymasters. If workmen become scarce, the manufacturer gives higher wages, but at first requires an increase of labour; and this is willingly submitted to by the artisan, ^{p32} who can now eat and drink better, to compensate his additional toil and fatigue. He carries his money to market, where he finds everything at the same price as formerly, but returns with greater quantity and of better kinds, for the use of his family. The farmer and gardener, finding that all commodities are taken off, apply themselves with alacrity to the raising more; and at the same time can afford to take better and more clothes from their tradesmen, whose price is the same as formerly, and their industry only whetted by so much new gain. It is easy to trace the money in its progress through the whole commonwealth; where

we shall find that it must first quicken the diligence of every individual, before it increase the price of labour.

And that the specie may increase to a considerable pitch before it have this latter effect appears, amongst other instances, from the frequent operations of the French king on the money; where it was always found that the augmenting the numerary value did not produce a proportional rise of the prices, at least for some time. In the last year of Louis XIV. money was raised three-sevenths, but prices augmented only one. Corn in France is now sold at the same price, or for the same number of livres it was in 1683; though silver was then at thirty livres the mark, and is now at fifty;^[14] not to mention the great addition of gold and ^{p33} silver which may have come into that kingdom since the former period.

From the whole of this reasoning we may conclude that it is of no manner of consequence, with regard to the domestic happiness of a state, whether money be in a greater or less quantity. The good policy of the magistrate consists only in keeping it, if possible, still increasing; because, by that means, he keeps alive a spirit of industry in the nation, and increases the stock of labour, in which consists all real power and riches. A nation whose money decreases is actually, at that time, much weaker and more miserable than another nation which possesses no more money but is on the increasing hand. This will be easily accounted for if we consider that the alterations in the quantity of money, either on the one side or the other, are not immediately attended with proportionable alterations in the prices of commodities. There is always an interval before matters be adjusted to their new situation, and this interval is as pernicious to industry when gold and silver are diminishing as it is advantageous when these metals are increasing. The workman has not the same employment from the manufacturer and merchant, though he pays the same price for everything in the market; the farmer cannot dispose of his corn and cattle, though he must pay the same rent to his landlord. The poverty, and beggary, and sloth which must ensue are easily foreseen.

The second observation which I proposed to make with regard to money may be explained after the following manner. There are some kingdoms, and many provinces in Europe (and all of them were once in the same condition), where money is so scarce that the landlord can get ^{p34} none at all from his tenants, but is obliged to take his rent in kind, and either to consume it himself, or transport it to places where he may find a market. In

those countries the prince can levy few or no taxes but in the same manner; and as he will receive very small benefit from impositions so paid, it is evident that such a kingdom has very little force even at home, and cannot maintain fleets and armies to the same extent as if every part of it abounded in gold and silver.^[15] There is surely a greater disproportion betwixt the force of Germany at present and what it was three centuries ago, than there is in its industry, people, and manufactures. The Austrian dominions in the empire are in general well peopled and well cultivated, and are of great extent, but have not a proportionable weight in the balance of Europe; proceeding, as is commonly supposed, from the scarcity of money. How do all these facts agree with that principle of reason, that the quantity of gold and silver is in itself altogether indifferent? According to that principle, wherever a sovereign has numbers of subjects, and these have plenty of commodities, he should of course be great and powerful, and they rich and happy, independent of the greater or lesser abundance of the precious metals. These admit of divisions and subdivisions to a great extent; and where they would become so small as to be in danger of being lost, it is easy to mix them with a baser metal, as is practised in some countries of Europe, and by that means raise them to a bulk more sensible and convenient. They still serve the same purposes of exchange, whatever their number may be, or whatever colour they may be supposed to have.

To these difficulties, I answer that the effect here supposed to flow from scarcity of money really arises from the manners and customs of the inhabitants, and that we mistake, as is too usual, a collateral effect for a cause. The ^{p35}contradiction is only apparent, but it requires some thought and reflection to discover the principles by which we can reconcile reason to experience.

It seems a maxim almost self-evident that the prices of everything depend on the proportion between commodities and money, and that any considerable alteration on either of these has the same effect, either of heightening or lowering the prices. Increase the commodities, they become cheaper; increase the money, they rise in their value. As, on the other hand, a diminution of the former and that of the latter have contrary tendencies.

It is also evident that the prices do not so much depend on the absolute quantity of commodities and that of money which are in a nation, as in that of the commodities which come or may come to market, and of the money which circulates. If the coin be locked up in chests, it is the same thing with

regard to prices as if it were annihilated; if the commodities be hoarded in granaries, a like effect follows. As the money and commodities, in these cases, never meet, they cannot affect each other. Were we, at any time, to form conjectures concerning the price of provisions, the corn which the farmer must reserve for the maintenance of himself and family ought never to enter into the estimation. It is only the overplus, compared to the demand, that determines the value.

To apply these principles, we must consider that in the first and more uncultivated ages of any state, ere fancy has confounded her wants with those of nature, men, contented with the productions of their own fields, or with those rude preparations which they themselves can work upon them, have little occasion for exchange, or at least for money, which, by agreement, is the common measure of exchange. The wool of the farmer's own flock, spun in his own family, and wrought by a neighbouring weaver, who receives his payment in corn or wool, suffices for furniture or clothing. The carpenter, the smith, the mason, the tailor are retained by wages of a like nature; and the landlord himself, dwelling in the neighbourhood, is contented to receive his rent in {p36} the commodities raised by the farmer. The greatest part of these he consumes at home, in rustic hospitality; the rest, perhaps, he disposes of for money to the neighbouring town, whence he draws the few materials of his expense and luxury.

But after men begin to refine on all these enjoyments, and live not always at home, nor are contented with what can be raised in their neighbourhood, there is more exchange and commerce of all kinds, and more money enters into that exchange. The tradesmen will not be paid in corn, because they want something more than barley to eat. The farmer goes beyond his own parish for the commodities he purchases, and cannot always carry his commodities to the merchant who supplies him. The landlord lives in the capital, or in a foreign country, and demands his rent in gold and silver, which can easily be transported to him. Great undertakers, and manufacturers, and merchants arise in every commodity; and these can conveniently deal in nothing but in specie. And consequently, in this situation of society, the coin enters into many more contracts, and by that means is much more employed than in the former.

The necessary effect is, that, provided the money does not increase in the nation, everything must become much cheaper in times of industry and refinement than in rude, uncultivated ages. It is the proportion between the

circulating money and the commodities in the market which determines the prices. Goods that are consumed at home, or exchanged with other goods in the neighbourhood, never come to market; they affect not in the least the current specie; with regard to it they are as if totally annihilated; and consequently this method of using them sinks the proportion on the side of the commodities and increases the prices. But after money enters into all contracts and sales, and is everywhere the measure of exchange, the same national cash has a much greater task to perform: all commodities are then in the market; the sphere of circulation is enlarged; it is the same case as if that individual sum were to serve a larger kingdom; and therefore, the ^{p37} proportion being here lessened on the side of the money, everything must become cheaper, and the prices gradually fall.

By the most exact computations that have been formed all over Europe, after making allowance for the alteration in the numerary value or the denomination, it is found that the prices of all things have only risen three, or at most, four times, since the discovery of the West Indies. But will any one assert that there is not much more than four times the coin in Europe that was in the fifteenth century and the centuries preceding it? The Spaniards and Portuguese from their mines, the English, French, and Dutch by their African trade, and by their interlopers in the West Indies, bring home six millions a year, of which not above a third part goes to the East Indies. This sum alone in ten years would probably double the ancient stock of money in Europe. And no other satisfactory reason can be given why all prices have not risen to a much more exorbitant height, except that derived from a change of customs and manners. Besides that more commodities are produced by additional industry, the same commodities come more to market after men depart from their ancient simplicity of manners; and though this increase has not been equal to that of money, it has, however, been considerable, and has preserved the proportion between coin and commodities nearer the ancient standard.

Were the question proposed, Which of these methods of living in the people, the simple or refined, is most advantageous to the state or public? I should, without much scruple, prefer the latter, in a view to politics at least; and should produce this as an additional reason for the encouragement of trade and manufactures.

When men live in the ancient simple manner, and supply all their necessities from domestic industry or from the neighbourhood, the

sovereign can levy no taxes in money from a considerable part of his subjects; and if he will impose on them any burdens, he must take his payment in commodities, with which alone they abound—a method ^{p38} attended with such great and obvious inconveniences, that they need not here be insisted on. All the money he can pretend to raise must be from his principal cities, where alone it circulates; and these, it is evident, cannot afford him so much as the whole state could, did gold and silver circulate through the whole. But besides this obvious diminution of the revenue, there is also another cause of the poverty of the public in such a situation. Not only the sovereign receives less money, but the same money goes not so far as in times of industry and general commerce. Everything is dearer where the gold and silver are supposed equal, and that because fewer commodities come to market, and the whole coin bears a higher proportion to what is to be purchased by it, whence alone the prices of everything are fixed and determined.

Here then we may learn the fallacy of the remark, often to be met with in historians, and even in common conversation, that any particular state is weak, though fertile, populous, and well cultivated, merely because it wants money. It appears that the want of money can never injure any state within itself: for men and commodities are the real strength of any community. It is the simple manner of living which here hurts the public, by confining the gold and silver to few hands and preventing its universal diffusion and circulation. On the contrary, industry and refinements of all kinds incorporate it with the whole state, however small its quantity may be; they digest it into every vein, so to speak, and make it enter into every transaction and contract. No hand is entirely empty of it. And as the prices of everything fall by that means, the sovereign has a double advantage: he may draw money by his taxes from every part of the state, and what he receives goes farther in every purchase and payment.

We may infer, from a comparison of prices, that money is not more plentiful in China than it was in Europe three centuries ago; but what immense power is that empire possessed of, if we may judge by the civil and military list maintained by it! Polybius tells us that provisions were so ^{p39} cheap in Italy during his time that in some places the stated club^[16] at the inns was a *semis* a head, little more than a farthing! Yet the Roman power had even then subdued the whole known world. About a century before that period the Carthaginian ambassador said, by way of raillery, that

no people lived more sociably amongst themselves than the Romans, for that in every entertainment which, as foreign ministers, they received they still observed the same plate at every table. The absolute quantity of the precious metals is a matter of great indifference. There are only two circumstances of any importance—viz., their gradual increase and their thorough concoction and circulation through the state; and the influence of both these circumstances has been here explained.

In the following essay we shall see an instance of a like fallacy as that above mentioned, where a collateral effect is taken for a cause, and where a consequence is ascribed to the plenty of money; though it be really owing to a change in the manners and customs of the people.

NOTES, OF MONEY.

12 A private soldier in the Roman infantry had a denarius a day, somewhat less than eightpence. The Roman emperors had commonly 25 legions in pay, which, allowing 5000 men to a legion, makes 125,000. (Tacitus, *Ann.* lib. 4.) It is true there were also auxiliaries to the legions, but their numbers are uncertain as well as their pay. To consider only the legionaries, the pay of the private men could not exceed £1,600,000. Now, the Parliament in the last war commonly allowed for the fleet £2,500,000. We have therefore £900,000 over for the officers and other expenses of the Roman legions. There seem to have been but few officers in the Roman armies in comparison of what are employed in all our modern troops, except some Swiss corps. And these officers had very small pay: a centurion, for instance, only double a common soldier. And as the soldiers from their pay (Tacitus, *Ann.* lib. 1) bought their own clothes, arms, tents, and baggage, this must also diminish considerably the other charges of the army. So little expensive was that mighty Government, and so easy was its yoke over the world. And, indeed, this is the more natural conclusion from the foregoing calculations; for money, after the conquest of Egypt, seems to have been nearly in as great plenty at Rome as it is at present in the richest of the European kingdoms.

13 This is the case with the bank of Amsterdam.

14 These facts I give upon the authority of Monsieur du Tot in his *Reflexions politiques*, an author of reputation; though I must confess that the facts which he advances on other occasions are often so suspicious as to make his authority less in this matter. However, the general observation that the augmenting the money in France does not at first proportionably augment the prices is certainly just.

By the by, this seems to be one of the best reasons which can be given for a gradual and universal augmentation of the money, though it has been entirely overlooked in all those volumes which have been written on that question by Melon, Du Tot, and Paris de Verney. Were all our money, for instance, recoinced, and a penny's worth of silver taken from every shilling, the new shilling would probably purchase everything that could have been bought by the old; the prices of everything would thereby be insensibly diminished; foreign trade enlivened; and domestic industry, by the circulation of a greater number of pounds and shillings, would receive some increase and encouragement. In executing such a project, it would be better to make the new shilling pass for twenty-four half-pence, in order to preserve the illusion, and make it be taken for the same. And as a recoinage of our silver begins to be requisite, by the continual wearing of our shillings and six-pences, it may be doubtful whether we ought to imitate the example in King William's reign, when the clipped money was raised to the old standard.

15 The Italians gave to the Emperor Maximilian the nickname of Pochi-Danari. None of the enterprises of that prince ever succeeded, for want of money.

OF INTEREST.

Nothing is esteemed a more certain sign of the flourishing condition of any nation than the lowness of interest; and with reason, though I believe the cause is somewhat different from what is commonly apprehended. The lowness of interest is generally ascribed to the plenty of money; but money, however plentiful, has no other effect, if fixed, than to raise the price of labour. Silver is more common than gold, and therefore you receive a great quantity of it for the same commodities. But do you pay less interest for it? Interest in Batavia and Jamaica is at 10 per cent., in Portugal at 6; though these places, as we may learn from {p40} the prices of everything, abound much more in gold and silver than either London or Amsterdam.

Were all the gold in England annihilated at once, and one-and-twenty shillings substituted in the place of every guinea, would money be more plentiful and interest lower? No surely; we should only use silver instead of gold. Were gold rendered as common as silver, and silver as common as copper, would money be more plentiful and interest lower? We may assuredly give the same answer. Our shillings would then be yellow, and our halfpence white; and we should have no guineas. No other difference would ever be observed; no alteration on commerce, manufactures, navigation, or interest; unless we imagine that the colour of the metal is of any consequence.

Now, what is so visible in these greater variations of scarcity or abundance of the precious metals must hold in all inferior changes. If the multiplying gold and silver fifteen times makes no difference, much less can the doubling or tripling them. All augmentation has no other effect than to heighten the price of labour and commodities; and even this variation is little more than that of a name. In the progress towards these changes the augmentation may have some influence by exciting industry; but after the prices are settled, suitable to the new abundance of gold and silver, it has no manner of influence.

An effect always holds proportion with its cause. Prices have risen about four times since the discovery of the Indies, and it is probable that gold and silver have multiplied much more; but interest has not fallen much above a half. The rate of interest, therefore, is not derived from the quantity of the precious metals.

Money having merely a fictitious value, arising from the agreement and convention of men, the greater or less plenty of it is of no consequence, if we consider a nation within itself; and the quantity of specie, when once fixed, though never so large, has no other effect than to oblige every one to tell out a greater number of those shining bits of metal for clothes, furniture, or equipage, without increasing any one {p41} convenience of life. If a man borrows money to build a house, he then carries home a greater load; because the stone, timber, lead, glass, etc., with the labour of the masons and carpenters, are represented by a greater quantity of gold and silver. But as these metals are considered merely as representations, there can no alteration arise from their bulk or quantity, their weight or colour, either upon their real value or their interest. The same interest, in all cases, bears the same proportion to the sum. And if you lent me so much labour and so many commodities, by receiving 5 per cent. you receive always proportional labour and commodities, however represented, whether by yellow or white coin, whether by a pound or an ounce. It is in vain, therefore, to look for the cause of the fall or rise of interest in the greater or less quantity of gold and silver which is fixed in any nation.

High interest arises from three circumstances: A great demand for borrowing; little riches to supply that demand; and great profits arising from commerce. And these circumstances are a clear proof of the small advance of commerce and industry, not of the scarcity of gold and silver. Low interest, on the other hand, proceeds from the three opposite circumstances: A small demand for borrowing; great riches to supply that demand; and small profits arising from commerce. And these circumstances are all connected together, and proceed from the increase of industry and commerce, not of gold and silver. We shall endeavour to prove these points as fully and distinctly as possible, and shall begin with the causes and the effects of a great or small demand for borrowing.

When the people have emerged ever so little from a savage state, and their numbers have increased beyond the original multitude, there must immediately arise an inequality of property; and while some possess large

tracts of land, others are confined within narrow limits, and some are entirely without any landed property. Those who possess more land than they can labour employ those who possess none, and agree to receive a determinate part of the {p42} product. Thus the landed interest is immediately established; nor is there any settled government, however rude, in which affairs are not on this footing. Of these proprietors of land, some must presently discover themselves to be of different tempers from others; and while one would willingly store up the product of his land for futurity, another desires to consume at present what should suffice for many years. But as the spending a settled revenue is a way of life entirely without occupation, men have so much need of somewhat to fix and engage them, that pleasures, such as they are, will be the pursuit of the greatest part of the landholders, and the prodigals amongst them will always be more numerous than the misers. In a state, therefore, where there is nothing but a landed interest, as there is little frugality, the borrowers must be very numerous, and the rate of interest must hold proportion to it. The difference depends not on the quantity of money, but on the habits and manners which prevail. By this alone the demand for borrowing is increased or diminished. Were money so plentiful as to make an egg be sold for sixpence, so long as there are only landed gentry and peasants in the state, the borrowers must be numerous and interest high. The rent for the same farm would be heavier and more bulky, but the same idleness of the landlord, with the higher prices of commodities, would dissipate it in the same time, and produce the same necessity and demand for borrowing.

Nor is the case different with regard to the second circumstance which we proposed to consider—viz., the great or little riches to supply this demand. This effect also depends on the habits and ways of living of the people, not on the quantity of gold and silver. In order to have in any state a great number of lenders, it is not sufficient nor requisite that there be great abundance of the precious metals. It is only requisite that the property or command of that quantity which is in the state, whether great or small, should be collected in particular hands, so as to form considerable sums, or compose a great moneyed interest. This begets a number of lenders and sinks the rate of usury; and {p43} this, I shall venture to affirm, depends not on the quantity of specie, but on particular manners and customs, which make the specie gather into separate sums or masses of considerable value.

For suppose that, by miracle, every man in Britain should have five pounds slipped into his pocket in one night: this would much more than double the whole money that is at present in the kingdom; and yet there would not next day, nor for some time, be any more lenders, nor any variation on the interest. And were there nothing but landlords and peasants in the state, this money, however abundant, could never gather into sums; and would only serve to increase the prices of everything, without any further consequence. The prodigal landlord dissipates it as fast as he receives it; and the beggarly peasant has no means, nor view, nor ambition of obtaining above a bare livelihood. The overplus of borrowers above that of lenders continuing still the same, there will follow no reduction of interest. That depends upon another principle, and must proceed from an increase of industry and frugality, of arts and commerce.

Everything useful to the life of man arises from the ground; but few things arise in that condition which is requisite to render them useful. There must, therefore, besides the peasants and the proprietors of land, be another rank of men, who, receiving from the former the rude materials, work them into their proper form, and retain part for their own use and subsistence. In the infancy of society, these contracts betwixt the artisans and the peasants, and betwixt one species of artisans and another, are commonly entered into immediately by the persons themselves, who, being neighbours, are easily acquainted with each other's necessities, and can lend their mutual assistance to supply them. But when men's industry increases, and their views enlarge, it is found that the most remote parts of the state can assist each other as well as the more contiguous, and that this intercourse of good offices may be carried on to the greatest extent and intricacy. Hence the origin of merchants, the most useful race of men in the {p44} whole society, who serve as agents between those parts of the state that are wholly unacquainted and are ignorant of each other's necessities. Here are in a city fifty workmen in silk and linen, and a thousand customers; and these two ranks of men, so necessary to each other, can never rightly meet till one man erects a shop, to which all the workmen and all the customers repair. In this province grass rises in abundance: the inhabitants abound in cheese, and butter, and cattle; but want bread and corn, which, in a neighbouring province, are in too great abundance for the use of the inhabitants. One man discovers this. He brings corn from the one province, and returns with cattle; and supplying the wants of both, he is, so far, a common benefactor.

As the people increase in numbers and industry, the difficulty of their intercourse increases: the business of the agency or merchandise becomes more intricate, and divides, subdivides, compounds, and mixes to a greater variety. In all these transactions it is necessary, and reasonable, that a considerable part of the commodities and labour should belong to the merchant, to whom, in a great measure, they are owing. And these commodities he will sometimes preserve in kind, or more commonly convert into money, which is their common representation. If gold and silver have increased in the state together with the industry, it will require a great quantity of these metals to represent a great quantity of commodities and labour; if industry alone has increased, the prices of everything must sink, and a very small quantity of specie will serve as a representation.

There is no craving or demand of the human mind more constant and insatiable than that for exercise and employment, and this desire seems the foundation of most of our passions and pursuits. Deprive a man of all business and serious occupation, he runs restless from one amusement to another; and the weight and oppression which he feels from idleness is so great that he forgets the ruin which must follow from his immoderate expenses. Give him a more harmless way of employing his mind or body, he is satisfied, and feels no longer that insatiable thirst after pleasure. {p45}

But if the employment you give him be profitable, especially if the profit be attached to every particular exertion of industry, he has gain so often in his eye that he acquires, by degrees, a passion for it, and knows no such pleasure as that of seeing the daily increase of his fortune. And this is the reason why trade increases frugality, and why, among merchants, there is the same overplus of misers above prodigals as, among the possessors of land, there is the contrary.

Commerce increases industry, by conveying it readily from one member of the state to another, and allowing none of it to perish or become useless. It increases frugality, by giving occupation to men, and employing them in the arts of gain, which soon engage their affection and remove all relish for pleasure and expense. It is an infallible consequence of all industrious professions to beget frugality, and make the love of gain prevail over the love of pleasure. Among lawyers and physicians who have any practice there are many more who live within their income than who exceed it, or even live up to it. But lawyers and physicians beget no industry, and it is even at the expense of others they acquire their riches; so that they are sure

to diminish the possessions of some of their fellow-citizens as fast as they increase their own. Merchants, on the contrary, beget industry, by serving as canals to convey it through every corner of the state; and at the same time, by their frugality, they acquire great power over that industry, and collect a large property in the labour and commodities which they are the chief instruments in producing. There is no other profession, therefore, except merchandise, which can make the moneyed interest considerable, or, in other words, can increase industry, and, by also increasing frugality, give a great command of that industry to particular members of the society. Without commerce, the state must consist chiefly of landed gentry, whose prodigality and expense make a continual demand for borrowing, and of peasants, who have no sums to supply that demand. The money never gathers into large stocks or sums which can be lent at ^{p46} interest. It is dispersed into numberless hands, who either squander it in idle show and magnificence, or employ it in the purchase of the common necessities of life. Commerce alone assembles it into considerable sums; and this effect it has merely from the industry which it begets and the frugality which it inspires, independent of that particular quantity of precious metal which may circulate in the state.

Thus an increase of commerce, by a necessary consequence, raises a great number of lenders, and by that means produces a lowness of interest. We must now consider how far this increase of commerce diminishes the profits arising from that profession, and gives rise to the third circumstance requisite to produce a lowness of interest.

It may be proper to observe on this head that low interest and low profits of merchandise are two events that mutually forward each other, and are both originally derived from that extensive commerce which produces opulent merchants and renders the moneyed interest considerable. Where merchants possess great stocks, whether represented by few or many pieces of metal, it must frequently happen that when they either become tired of business or have heirs unwilling or unfit to engage in commerce, a great deal of these riches will seek an annual and secure revenue. The plenty diminishes the price, and makes the lenders accept of a low interest. This consideration obliges many to keep their stocks in trade, and rather be content with low profits than dispose of their money at an under value. On the other hand, when commerce has become very extensive, and employs very large stocks, there must arise rivalships among the merchants, which

diminish the profits of trade, at the same time that they increase the trade itself. The low profits of merchandise induce the merchants to accept more willingly of a low interest, when they leave off business and begin to indulge themselves in ease and indolence. It is needless, therefore, to inquire which of these circumstances—viz., low interest or low profits, is the cause, and which the effect. They both arise from an {p47} extensive commerce, and mutually forward each other. No man will accept of low profits where he can have high interest, and no man will accept of low interest where he can have high profits. An extensive commerce, by producing large stocks, diminishes both interest and profits; and is always assisted in its diminution of the one by the proportional sinking of the other. I may add, that as low profits arise from the increase of commerce and industry, they serve in their turn to the further increase of commerce, by rendering the commodities cheaper, encouraging the consumption, and heightening the industry. And thus, if we consider the whole connection of causes and effects, interest is the true barometer of the state, and its lowness is a sign almost infallible of the flourishing of a people. It proves the increase of industry, and its prompt circulation through the whole state, little inferior to a demonstration. And though, perhaps, it may not be impossible but a sudden and a great check to commerce may have a momentary effect of the same kind, by throwing so many stocks out of trade, it must be attended with such misery and want of employment in the poor that, besides its short duration, it will not be possible to mistake the one case for the other.

Those who have asserted that the plenty of money was the cause of low interest seem to have taken a collateral effect for a cause, since the same industry which sinks the interest does commonly acquire great abundance of the precious metals. A variety of fine manufactures, with vigilant, enterprising merchants, will soon draw money to a state if it be anywhere to be found in the world. The same cause, by multiplying the conveniences of life and increasing industry, collects great riches into the hands of persons who are not proprietors of land, and produces by that means a lowness of interest. But though both these effects—plenty of money and low interest—naturally arise from commerce and industry, they are altogether independent of each other. For suppose a nation removed into the Pacific Ocean, without any foreign commerce, or any knowledge of {p48} navigation: suppose that this nation possesses always the same stock of coin, but is continually

increasing in its numbers and industry: it is evident that the price of every commodity must gradually diminish in that kingdom, since it is the proportion between money and any species of goods which fixes their mutual value; and, under the present supposition, the conveniences of life become every day more abundant, without any alteration on the current specie. A less quantity of money, therefore, amongst this people will make a rich man, during the times of industry, than would serve to that purpose in ignorant and slothful ages. Less money will build a house, portion a daughter, buy an estate, support a manufactory, or maintain a family and equipage. These are the uses for which men borrow money, and therefore the greater or less quantity of it in a state has no influence on the interest. But it is evident that the greater or less stock of labour and commodities must have a great influence, since we really and in effect borrow these when we take money upon interest. It is true, when commerce is extended all over the globe the most industrious nations always abound most with the precious metals; so that low interest and plenty of money are in fact almost inseparable. But still it is of consequence to know the principle whence any phenomenon arises, and to distinguish between a cause and a concomitant effect. Besides that the speculation is curious, it may frequently be of use in the conduct of public affairs. At least, it must be owned that nothing can be of more use than to improve, by practice, the method of reasoning on these subjects, which of all others are the most important; though they are commonly treated in the loosest and most careless manner.

Another reason of this popular mistake with regard to the cause of low interest seems to be the instance of some nations, where, after a sudden acquisition of money or the precious metals by means of foreign conquest, the interest has fallen not only among them but in all the neighbouring states as soon as that money was dispersed and had insinuated itself into every corner. Thus, interest ^{p49} in Spain fell nearly a half immediately after the discovery of the West Indies, as we are informed by Garcilasso de la Vega; and it has been ever since sinking in every kingdom of Europe. Interest in Rome, after the conquest of Egypt, fell from 6 to 4 per cent., as we learn from Dion.

The causes of the sinking of interest upon such an event seem different in the conquering country and in the neighbouring states, but in neither of them can we justly ascribe that effect merely to the increase of gold and silver.

In the conquering country it is natural to imagine that this new acquisition of money will fall into a few hands, and be gathered into large sums which seek a secure revenue, either by the purchase of land or by interest; and consequently the same effect follows, for a little time, as if there had been a great accession of industry and commerce. The increase of lenders above the borrowers sinks the interest, and so much the faster if those who have acquired those large sums find no industry or commerce in the state, and no method of employing their money but by lending it at interest. But after this new mass of gold and silver has been digested, and has circulated through the whole state, affairs will soon return to their former situation, while the landlords and new money-holders, living idly, squander above their income, and the former daily contract debt, and the latter encroach on their stock till its final extinction. The whole money may still be in the state, and make itself be felt by the increase of prices, but not being now collected into any large masses or stocks, the disproportion between the borrowers and lenders is the same as formerly, and consequently the high interest returns.

Accordingly, we find in Rome that so early as Tiberius's time interest had again mounted to 6 per cent., though no accident had happened to drain the empire of money. In Trajan's time money lent on mortgages in Italy bore 6 per cent.; on common securities in Bithynia, 12. And if interest in Spain has not risen to its old pitch, this can be ascribed to nothing but the continuance of the same {p50} cause that sunk it—viz., the large fortunes continually made in the Indies, which come over to Spain from time to time and supply the demand of the borrowers. By this accidental and extraneous cause more money is to be lent in Spain—that is, more money is collected into large sums than would otherwise be found in a state where there are so little commerce and industry.

As to the reduction of interest which has followed in England, France, and other kingdoms of Europe that have no mines, it has been gradual, and has not proceeded from the increase of money, considered merely in itself, but from the increase of industry, which is the natural effect of the former increase, in that interval, before it raises the price of labour and provisions. For to return to the foregoing supposition, if the industry of England had risen as much from other causes (and that rise might easily have happened though the stock of money had remained the same), must not all the same consequences have followed which we observe at present? The same people

would, in that case, be found in the kingdom, the same commodities, the same industry, manufactures, and commerce, and consequently the same merchants with the same stocks—that is, with the same command over labour and commodities, only represented by a smaller number of white or yellow pieces, which, being a circumstance of no moment, would only affect the waggoner, porter, and trunk-maker. Luxury, therefore, manufactures, arts, industry, frugality flourishing equally as at present, it is evident that interest must also have been as low, since that is the necessary result of all these circumstances, so far as they determine the profits of commerce and the proportion between the borrowers and lenders in any state.

NOTE, OF INTEREST.

16 Price for a meal.

OF THE BALANCE OF TRADE.

It is very usual in nations ignorant of the nature of commerce to prohibit the exportation of commodities, and to preserve among themselves whatever they think valuable and useful. They consider not that in this prohibition they act directly contrary to their intention, and that the more is exported of any commodity the more will be raised at home, of which they themselves will always have the first offer.

It is well known to the learned that the ancient laws of Athens rendered the exportation of figs criminal, that being supposed a species of fruit so excellent in Attica that the Athenians esteemed it too delicious for the palate of any foreigner; and in this ridiculous prohibition they were so much in earnest that informers were thence called “sycophants” among them, from two Greek words which signify figs and discoverer. There are proofs in many old Acts of Parliament of the same ignorance in the nature of commerce, particularly in the reign of Edward III.; and to this day in France the exportation of corn is almost always prohibited—in order, as they say, to prevent famines, though it is evident that nothing contributes more to the frequent famines which so much distress that fertile country.

The same jealous fear with regard to money has also prevailed among several nations, and it required both reason and experience to convince any people that these prohibitions serve to no other purpose than to raise the exchange against them and produce a still greater exportation.

These errors, one may say, are gross and palpable; but there still prevails, even in nations well acquainted with commerce, a strong jealousy with regard to the balance of trade, and a fear that all their gold and silver may be leaving them. This seems to me, almost in every case, a very groundless apprehension, and I should as soon {p52} dread that all our springs and rivers should be exhausted as that money should abandon a kingdom where there are people and industry. Let us carefully preserve these latter advantages, and we need never be apprehensive of losing the former.

It is easy to observe that all calculations concerning the balance of trade are founded on very uncertain facts and suppositions. The custom-house books are allowed to be an insufficient ground of reasoning; nor is the rate of exchange much better, unless we consider it with all nations, and know also the proportion of the several sums remitted, which one may safely pronounce impossible. Every man who has ever reasoned on this subject has always proved his theory, whatever it was, by facts and calculations, and by an enumeration of all the commodities sent to all foreign kingdoms.

The writings of Mr. Gee struck the nation with a universal panic when they saw it plainly demonstrated by a detail of particulars that the balance was against them for so considerable a sum as must leave them without a single shilling in five or six years. But luckily twenty years have since elapsed, with an expensive foreign war, and yet it is commonly supposed that money is still more plentiful among us than in any former period.

Nothing can be more entertaining on this head than Dr. Swift, an author so quick in discerning the mistakes and absurdities of others. He says, in his *Short View of the State of Ireland*, that the whole cash of that kingdom amounted but to £500,000; that out of this they remitted every year a neat million to England, and had scarce any other source from which they could compensate themselves, and little other foreign trade but the importation of French wines, for which they paid ready money. The consequence of this situation, which must be owned to be disadvantageous, was that in a course of three years the current money of Ireland from £500,000 was reduced to less than two; and at present, I suppose, in a course of thirty years, it is absolutely nothing. Yet I know not how ^{p53} that opinion of the advance of riches in Ireland, which gave the Doctor so much indignation, seems still to continue and gain ground with everybody.

In short, this apprehension of the wrong balance of trade appears of such a nature that it discovers itself wherever one is out of humour with the ministry, or is in low spirits; and as it can never be refuted by a particular detail of all the exports which counterbalance the imports, it may here be proper to form a general argument which may prove the impossibility of that event as long as we preserve our people and our industry.

Suppose four-fifths of all the money in Britain to be annihilated in one night, and the nation reduced to the same condition, with regard to specie, as in the reigns of the Harrys and Edwards, what would be the consequence? Must not the price of all labour and commodities sink in

proportion, and everything be sold as cheap as they were in those ages? What nation could then dispute with us in any foreign market, or pretend to navigate or to sell manufactures at the same price which to us would afford sufficient profit? In how little time, therefore, must this bring back the money which we had lost, and raise us to the level of all the neighbouring nations? where, after we have arrived, we immediately lose the advantage of the cheapness of labour and commodities, and the further flowing in of money is stopped by our fulness and repletion.

Again, suppose that all the money of Britain were multiplied fivefold in a night, must not the contrary effect follow? Must not labour and commodities rise to such an exorbitant height that no neighbouring nations could afford to buy from us, while their commodities, on the other hand, became so cheap in comparison that, in spite of all the laws which could be formed, they would be run in upon us, and our money flow out till we come to a level with foreigners, and lose that great superiority of riches which had laid us under such disadvantages?

Now, it is evident that the same causes which would correct these exorbitant inequalities, were they to happen {p54} miraculously, must prevent their happening in the common course of nature, and must for ever, in all the neighbouring nations, preserve money nearly proportionable to the art and industry of each nation. All water, wherever it communicates, remains always at a level. Ask naturalists the reason: they tell you that were it to be raised in any one place, the superior gravity of that part not being balanced, must depress it till it meets a counterpoise; and that the same cause which redresses the inequality when it happens must for ever prevent it without some violent external operation.^[17]

Can one imagine that it had ever been possible, by any laws, or even by any art or industry, to have kept all the money in Spain which the galleons have brought from the Indies? or that all commodities could be sold in France for a tenth of the price which they would yield on the other side of the Pyrenees, without finding their way thither, and draining from that immense treasure? What other reason, indeed, is there why all nations at present gain in their trade with Spain and Portugal, but because it is impossible to heap up money, more than any fluid, beyond its proper level? The sovereigns of these countries have shown that they wanted not inclination to keep their gold and silver to themselves had it been in any degree practicable.

But as any body of water may be raised above the level of the surrounding element, if the former has no communication with the latter, so in money, if the communication be cut off by any material or physical impediment (for all laws alone are ineffectual), there may, in such a case, be a very great inequality of money. Thus the immense distance of China, together with the monopolies of our India {p55} companies, obstructing the communication, preserve in Europe the gold and silver, especially the latter, in much greater plenty than they are found in that kingdom. But, notwithstanding this great obstruction, the force of the causes above-mentioned is still evident. The skill and ingenuity of Europe in general surpasses perhaps that of China with regard to manual arts and manufactures, yet are we never able to trade thither without great disadvantage; and were it not for the continual recruits which we receive from America, money would very soon sink in Europe and rise in China, till it came nearly to a level in both places. Nor can any reasonable man doubt but that industrious nation, were they as near us as Poland or Barbary, would drain us of the overplus of our specie, and draw to themselves a larger share of the West Indian treasures. We need have no recourse to a physical attraction to explain the necessity of this operation; there is a moral attraction arising from the interests and passions of men which is full as potent and infallible.

How is the balance kept in the provinces of every kingdom among themselves but by the force of this principle, which makes it impossible for money to lose its level, and either to rise or sink beyond the proportion of the labour and commodities which is in each province? Did not long experience make people easy on this head, what a fund of gloomy reflections might calculations afford a melancholy Yorkshireman while he computed and magnified the sums drawn to London by taxes, absentees, commodities, and found on comparison the opposite articles so much inferior? And no doubt, had the Heptarchy subsisted in England, the legislature of each state had been continually alarmed by the fear of a wrong balance; and it is probable that the mutual hatred of these states would have been extremely violent on account of their close neighbourhood; they would have loaded and oppressed all commerce by a jealous and superfluous caution. Since the Union has removed the barriers between Scotland and England, which of these nations gains from the other by this free commerce? Or if {p56} the former kingdom has received any

increase of riches, can it be reasonably accounted for by anything but the increase of its art and industry? It was a common apprehension in England before the Union, as we learn from L'Abbe du Bos, that Scotland would soon drain them of their treasure were an open trade allowed; and on the other side of the Tweed a contrary apprehension prevailed—with what justice in both time has shown.

What happens in small portions of mankind must take place in greater. The provinces of the Roman empire no doubt kept their balance with each other, and with Italy, independent of the legislature, as much as the several counties of Britain or the several parishes of each county. And any man who travels over Europe at this day may see by the prices of commodities that money, in spite of the absurd jealousy of princes and states, has brought itself nearly to a level, and that the difference between one kingdom and another is not greater in this respect than it is often between different provinces of the same kingdom. Men naturally flock to capital cities, seaports, and navigable rivers. There we find more men, more industry, more commodities, and consequently more money; but still the latter difference holds proportion with the former, and the level is preserved.^[18]

Our jealousy and our hatred of France are without bounds, and the former sentiment at least must be ^{p57} acknowledged very reasonable and well-grounded. These passions have occasioned innumerable barriers and obstructions upon commerce, where we are accused of being commonly the aggressors. But what have we gained by the bargain? We lost the French market for our woollen manufactures, and transferred the commerce of wine to Spain and Portugal, where we buy much worse liquor at a higher price. There are few Englishmen who would not think their country absolutely ruined were French wines sold in England so cheap and in such abundance as to supplant, in some measure, all ale and home-brewed liquors; but would we lay aside prejudice, it would not be difficult to prove that nothing could be more innocent, perhaps advantageous. Each new acre of vineyard planted in France, in order to supply England with wine, would make it requisite for the French to take the produce of an English acre, sown in wheat or barley, in order to subsist themselves; and it is evident that we have thereby got command of the better commodity.

There are many edicts of the French King prohibiting the planting of new vineyards, and ordering all those already planted to be grubbed up, so

sensible are they in that country of the superior value of corn above every other product.

Mareschal Vauban complains often, and with reason, of the absurd duties which load the entry of those wines of Languedoc, Guienne, and other southern provinces that are imported into Brittany and Normandy. He entertained no doubt but these latter provinces could preserve their balance notwithstanding the open commerce which he recommends. And it is evident that a few leagues more navigation to England would make no difference; or if it did, that it must operate alike on the commodities of both kingdoms.

There is indeed one expedient by which it is possible to sink, and another by which we may raise, money beyond its natural level in any kingdom; but these cases, when examined, will be found to resolve into our general theory, and to bring additional authority to it. {p58}

I scarce know any method of sinking money below its level but those institutions of banks, funds, and paper-credit which are so much practised in this kingdom. These render paper equivalent to money, circulate it through the whole state, make it supply the place of gold and silver, raise proportionally the price of labour and commodities, and by that means either banish a great part of those precious metals, or prevent their further increase. What can be more short-sighted than our reasonings on this head? We fancy, because an individual would be much richer were his stock of money doubled, that the same good effect would follow were the money of every one increased, not considering that this would raise as much the price of every commodity, and reduce every man in time to the same condition as before. It is only in our public negotiations and transactions with foreigners that a greater stock of money is advantageous; and as our paper is there absolutely insignificant, we feel, by its means, all the ill effects arising from a great abundance of money without reaping any of the advantages.[19]

Suppose that there are twelve millions of paper which circulate in the kingdom as money (for we are not to imagine that all our enormous funds are employed in that shape), and suppose the real cash of the kingdom to be eighteen millions: here is a state which is found by experience able to hold a stock of thirty millions. I say, if it be able to hold it, it must of necessity have acquired it in gold and silver had we not obstructed the entrance of these metals by this new invention of paper. Whence would it have acquired that sum? From all the kingdoms of the world. But why? Because, if you

remove these twelve millions, money in this state is below its level compared with our {p59} neighbours; and we must immediately draw from all of them till we be full and saturate, so to speak, and can hold no more. By our present politics we are as careful to stuff the nation with this fine commodity of bank-bills and chequer notes as if we were afraid of being overburdened with the precious metals.

It is not to be doubted but the great plenty of bullion in France is, in a great measure, owing to the want of paper-credit. The French have no banks; merchants' bills do not there circulate as with us; usury or lending on interest is not directly permitted, so that many have large sums in their coffers; great quantities of plate are used in private houses, and all the churches are full of it. By this means provision and labour still remain much cheaper among them than in nations that are not half so rich in gold and silver. The advantages of this situation in point of trade, as well as in great public emergencies, are too evident to be disputed.

The same fashion a few years ago prevailed in Genoa which still has place in England and Holland, of using services of china ware instead of plate; but the Senate, wisely foreseeing the consequence, prohibited the use of that brittle commodity beyond a certain extent, while the use of silver plate was left unlimited. And I suppose, in their late distresses, they felt the good effect of this ordinance. Our tax on plate is, perhaps, in this view, somewhat impolitic.

Before the introduction of paper-money into our colonies, they had gold and silver sufficient for their circulation. Since the introduction of that commodity, the least inconveniency that has followed is the total banishment of the precious metals. And after the abolition of paper, can it be doubted but money will return, while these colonies possess manufactures and commodities, the only thing valuable in commerce, and for whose sake alone all men desire money?

What pity Lycurgus did not think of paper-credit when he wanted to banish gold and silver from Sparta! It would {p60} have served his purpose better than the lumps of iron he made use of as money, and would also have prevented more effectually all commerce with strangers, as being of so much less real and intrinsic value.

It must, however, be confessed that, as all these questions of trade and money are extremely complicated, there are certain lights in which this subject may be placed so as to represent the advantages of paper-credit and

banks to be superior to their disadvantages. That they banish specie and bullion from a state is undoubtedly true, and whoever looks no farther than this circumstance does well to condemn them; but specie and bullion are not of so great consequence as not to admit of a compensation, and even an overbalance from the increase of industry and of credit which may be promoted by the right use of paper-money. It is well known of what advantage it is to a merchant to be able to discount his bills upon occasion; and everything that facilitates this species of traffic is favourable to the general commerce of a state. But private bankers are enabled to give such credit by the credit they receive from the depositing of money in their shops; and the Bank of England in the same manner, from the liberty they have to issue their notes in all payments. There was an invention of this kind which was fallen upon some years ago by the banks of Edinburgh, and which, as it is one of the most ingenious ideas that has been executed in commerce, has also been found very advantageous to Scotland. It is there called a bank-credit, and is of this nature: A man goes to the bank and finds surety to the amount, we shall suppose, of five thousand pounds. This money, or any part of it, he has the liberty of drawing out whenever he pleases, and he pays only the ordinary interest for it while it is in his hands. He may, when he pleases, repay any sum so small as twenty pounds, and the interest is discounted from the very day of the repayment. The advantages resulting from this contrivance are manifold. As a man may find surety nearly to the amount of his substance, and his bank-credit is equivalent to ready money, {p61} a merchant does hereby in a manner coin his houses, his household furniture, the goods in his warehouse, the foreign debts due to him, his ships at sea; and can, upon occasion, employ them in all payments as if they were the current money of the country. If a man borrows five thousand pounds from a private hand, besides that it is not always to be found when required, he pays interest for it whether he be using it or not; his bank-credit costs him nothing except during the very moment in which it is of service to him, and this circumstance is of equal advantage as if he had borrowed money at much lower interest. Merchants likewise from this invention acquire a great facility in supporting each other's credit, which is a considerable security against bankruptcies. A man, when his own bank-credit is exhausted, goes to any of his neighbours who is not in the same condition, and he gets the money, which he replaces at his convenience.

After this practice had taken place during some years at Edinburgh, several companies of merchants at Glasgow carried the matter farther. They associated themselves into different banks and issued notes so low as ten shillings, which they used in all payments for goods, manufactures, tradesmen, labour of all kinds; and these notes, from the established credit of the companies, passed as money in all payments throughout the country. By this means a stock of five thousand pounds was able to perform the same operations as if it were ten, and merchants were thereby enabled to trade to a greater extent, and to require less profit in all their transactions. In Newcastle and Bristol, as well as other trading places, the merchants have since instituted banks of a like nature, in imitation of those in Glasgow. But whatever other advantages result from these inventions, it must still be allowed that they banish the precious metals; and nothing can be a more evident proof of it than a comparison of the past and present condition of Scotland in that particular. It was found, upon the recoinage made after the Union, that there was near a million of specie in that country; but notwithstanding the great increase of {p62} riches, commerce and manufactures of all kinds, it is thought that, even where there is no extraordinary drain made by England, the current specie will not now amount to a fifth of that sum.

But as our projects of paper-credit are almost the only expedient by which we can sink money below its level, so, in my opinion, the only expedient by which we can raise money above its level is a practice which we should all exclaim against as destructive—viz., the gathering large sums into a public treasure, locking them up, and absolutely preventing their circulation. The fluid not communicating with the neighbouring element may, by such an artifice, be raised to what height we please. To prove this we need only return to our first supposition of the annihilating the half or any part of our cash, where we found that the immediate consequence of such an event would be the attraction of an equal sum from all the neighbouring kingdoms. Nor does there seem to be any necessary bounds set by the nature of things to this practice of hoarding. A small city like Geneva, continuing this policy for ages, might engross nine-tenths of the money of Europe. There seems, indeed, in the nature of man an invincible obstacle to that immense growth of riches. A weak state with an enormous treasure will soon become a prey to some of its poorer but more powerful neighbours; a great state would dissipate its wealth in dangerous and ill-

concerted projects, and probably destroy with it what is much more valuable—the industry, morals, and number of its people. The fluid in this case, raised to too great a height, bursts and destroys the vessel that contains it, and mixing itself with the surrounding element, soon falls to its proper level.

So little are we commonly acquainted with this principle that, though all historians agree in relating uniformly so recent an event as the immense treasure amassed by Harry VII. (which they make amount to £1,700,000), we rather reject their concurring testimony than admit of a fact which agrees so ill with our inveterate prejudices. It is indeed probable that that sum might be {p63} three-fourths of all the money in England; but where is the difficulty that such a sum might be amassed in twenty years by a cunning, rapacious, frugal, and almost absolute monarch? Nor is it probable that the diminution of circulating money was ever sensibly felt by the people, or ever did them any prejudice. The sinking of the prices of all commodities would immediately replace it, by giving England the advantage in its commerce with all the neighbouring kingdoms.

Have we not an instance in the small republic of Athens with its allies, who in about fifty years between the Median and Peloponnesian Wars amassed a sum greater than that of Harry VII.?[20] for all the Greek historians and orators agree that the Athenians collected in the citadel more than 10,000 talents, which they afterwards dissipated, to their own ruin, in rash and imprudent enterprises. But when this money was set a-running, and began to communicate with the surrounding fluid, what was the consequence? Did it remain in the state? No; for we find by the memorable census mentioned by Demosthenes and Polybius that, in about fifty years afterwards, the whole value of the republic, comprehending lands, houses, commodities, slaves, and money was less than 6000 talents.

What an ambitious, high-spirited people was this, to collect and keep in their treasury, with a view to conquests, a sum which it was every day in the power of the citizens, by a single vote, to distribute among themselves, and which would go near to triple the riches of every individual; for we must observe that the numbers and private riches of the Athenians are said by ancient writers to have been no greater at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War than at the beginning of the Macedonian.

Money was little more plentiful in Greece during the age of Philip and Perseus than in England during that of Harry VII., yet these two monarchs

in thirty years {p64} collected from the small kingdom of Macedon a much larger treasure than that of the English monarch. Paulus Æmilius brought to Rome about £1,700,000 sterling—Pliny says £2,400,000—and that was but a part of the Macedonian treasure; the rest was dissipated by the resistance and flight of Perseus.

We may learn from Stanyan that the Canton of Berne had £300,000 lent at interest, and had above six times as much in their treasury. Here, then, is a sum hoarded of £1,800,000 sterling, which is at least quadruple of what should naturally circulate in such a petty state; and yet no one who travels into the Pais de Vaux, or any part of that canton, observes any want of money more than could be supposed in a country of that extent, soil, and situation. On the contrary, there are scarce any inland provinces in the countries of France or Germany where the inhabitants are at this time so opulent, though that canton has vastly increased its treasure since 1714, the time when Stanyan wrote his judicious account of Switzerland.[\[21\]](#)

The account given by Appian of the treasure of the Ptolemies is so prodigious that one cannot admit of it, and so much the less because the historian says the other successors of Alexander were all so frugal, and had many of them treasures not much inferior; for this saving humour of the neighbouring princes must necessarily have checked the frugality of the Egyptian monarchs, according to the foregoing theory. The sum he mentions is 740,000 talents, or £191,166,666 13s. 4d., according to Dr. Arbuthnot's computation; and yet Appian says that he extracted his account from the public records, and he was himself a native of Alexandria.

From these principles we may learn what judgment we ought to form of those numberless bars, obstructions, and imposts which all nations of Europe, and none more than {p65} England, have put upon trade, from an exorbitant desire of amassing money, which never will heap up beyond its level while it circulates; or from an ill-grounded apprehension of losing their specie, which never will sink below it. Could anything scatter our riches, it would be such impolitic contrivances. But this general ill effect, however, results from them, that they deprive neighbouring nations of that free communication and exchange which the Author of the world has intended, by giving them soils, climates, and geniuses so different from each other.

Our modern politics embrace the only method of banishing money—the using paper-credit; they reject the only method of amassing it, the practice

of hoarding; and they adopt a hundred contrivances which serve to no purpose but to check industry, and rob ourselves and our neighbours of the common benefits of art and nature.

All taxes, however, upon foreign commodities are not to be regarded as prejudicial or useless, but those only which are founded on the jealousy above mentioned. A tax on German linen encourages home manufactures, and thereby multiplies our people and industry; a tax on brandy increases the sale of rum, and supports our southern colonies. And as it is necessary imposts should be levied for the support of government, it may be thought more convenient to lay them on foreign commodities, which can easily be intercepted at the port and subjected to the impost. We ought, however, always to remember the maxim of Dr. Swift, that, in the arithmetic of the customs, two and two make not four, but often make only one. It can scarcely be doubted but if the duties on wine were lowered to a third, they would yield much more to the Government than at present; our people might thereby afford to drink commonly a better and more wholesome liquor, and no prejudice would ensue to the balance of trade, of which we are so jealous. The manufacture of ale beyond the agriculture is but inconsiderable, and gives employment to few hands. The transport of wine and corn would not be much inferior. {p66}

But are there not frequent instances, you will say, of states and kingdoms which were formerly rich and opulent, and are now poor and beggarly? Has not the money left them with which they formerly abounded? I answer, if they lose their trade, industry, and people, they cannot expect to keep their gold and silver, for these precious metals will hold proportion to the former advantages. When Lisbon and Amsterdam got the East India trade from Venice and Genoa, they also got the profits and money which arose from it. Where the seat of government is transferred, where expensive armies are maintained at a distance, where great funds are possessed by foreigners, there naturally follows from these causes a diminution of the specie. But these, we may observe, are violent and forcible methods of carrying away money, and are in time commonly attended with the transport of people and industry; but where these remain, and the drain is not continued, the money always finds its way back again, by a hundred canals of which we have no notion or suspicion. What immense treasures have been spent, by so many nations, in Flanders since the revolution, in the course of three long wars! More money perhaps than

the half of what is at present in all Europe. But what has now become of it? Is it in the narrow compass of the Austrian provinces? No, surely; it has most of it returned to the several countries whence it came, and has followed that art and industry by which at first it was acquired. For above a thousand years the money of Europe has been flowing to Rome by an open and sensible current; but it has been emptied by many secret and insensible canals, and the want of industry and commerce renders at present the papal dominions the poorest territories in all Italy.

In short, a government has great reason to preserve with care its people and its manufactures. Its money it may safely trust to the course of human affairs, without fear or jealousy; or if it ever give attention to this latter circumstance, it ought only to be so far as it affects the former.

NOTES, OF THE BALANCE OF TRADE.

17 There is another cause, though more limited in its operation, which checks the wrong balance of trade, to every particular nation to which the kingdom trades. When we import more goods than we export, the exchange turns against us, and this becomes a new encouragement to export, as much as the charge of carriage and insurance of the money which becomes due would amount to. For the exchange can never rise higher than that sum.

18 It must carefully be remarked that throughout this discourse, wherever I speak of the level of money I mean always its proportional level to the commodities, labour, industry, and skill which is in the several states; and I assert that where these advantages are double, treble, quadruple to what they are in the neighbouring states, the money infallibly will also be double, treble, quadruple. The only circumstance that can obstruct the exactness of these proportions is the expense of transporting the commodities from one place to another, and this expense is sometimes unequal. Thus the corn, cattle, cheese, butter of Derbyshire cannot draw the money of London so much as the manufactures of London draw the money of Derbyshire. But this objection is only a seeming one, for so far as the transport of commodities is expensive, so far is the communication between the places obstructed and imperfect.

19 We observed in essay *Of Money*, that money, when increasing, gives encouragement to industry during the interval between the increase of money and the rise of the prices. A good effect of this nature may follow too from paper-credit; but it is dangerous to precipitate matters at the risk of losing all by the failing of that credit, as must happen upon any violent shock in public affairs.

20 There were about eight ounces of silver in a pound sterling in Harry VII.'s time.

21 The poverty which Stanyan speaks of is only to be seen in the most mountainous cantons, where there is no commodity to bring money; and even there the people are not poorer than in the diocese of Saltsburg on the one hand, or Savoy on the other.

OF THE JEALOUSY OF TRADE.

Having endeavoured to remove one species of ill-founded jealousy which is so prevalent among commercial nations, it may not be amiss to mention another which seems equally groundless. Nothing is more usual, among states which have made some advances in commerce, than to look on the progress of their neighbours with a suspicious eye, to consider all trading states as their rivals, and to suppose that it is impossible for any of them to flourish but at their expense. In opposition to this narrow and malignant opinion, I will venture to assert that the increase of riches and commerce in any one nation, instead of hurting, commonly promotes the riches and commerce of all its neighbours; and that a state can scarcely carry its trade and industry very far where all the surrounding states are buried in ignorance, sloth, and barbarism.

It is obvious that the domestic industry of a people cannot be hurt by the greatest prosperity of their neighbours; and as this branch of commerce is undoubtedly the most important in any extensive kingdom, we are so far removed from all reason of jealousy. But I go farther, and observe that where an open communication is preserved among nations, it is impossible but the domestic industry of every one must receive an increase from the improvements of the others. Compare the situation of Great Britain at present with what it was two centuries ago. All the arts, both of agriculture and manufactures, were then extremely rude and imperfect. Every improvement which we have since made has arisen from our imitation of foreigners, and we ought so far to esteem it happy that they had previously made advances in arts and ingenuity. But this intercourse is still upheld to our great advantage. Notwithstanding the advanced state of our manufactures, we daily adopt in every art the inventions and improvements of our neighbours. The commodity is ^{p68} first imported from abroad, to our great discontent, while we imagine that it drains us of our money; afterwards the art itself is gradually imported, to our visible advantage. Yet

we continue still to repine that our neighbours should possess any art, industry, and invention, forgetting that had they not first instructed us we should have been at present barbarians, and did they not still continue their instructions, the arts must fall into a state of languor, and lose that emulation and novelty which contribute so much to their advancement.

The increase of domestic industry lays the foundation of foreign commerce. Where a great number of commodities are raised and perfected for the home-market there will always be found some which can be exported with advantage. But if our neighbours have no art nor cultivation, they cannot take them, because they will have nothing to give in exchange. In this respect, states are in the same condition as individuals. A single man can scarce be industrious where all his fellow-citizens are idle. The riches of the several members of a community contribute to increase my riches, whatever profession I may follow. They consume the produce of my industry, and afford me the produce of theirs in return.

Nor need any state entertain apprehensions that their neighbours will improve to such a degree in every art and manufacture as to have no demand from them. Nature, by giving a diversity of geniuses, climates, and soils to different nations, has secured their mutual intercourse and commerce, as long as they all remain industrious and civilized. Nay, the more the arts increase in any state, the more will be its demands from its industrious neighbours. The inhabitants, having become opulent and skilful, desire to have every commodity in the utmost perfection; and as they have plenty of commodities to give in exchange, they make large importations from every foreign country. The industry of the nations from whom they import receives encouragement; their own is also increased by the sale of the commodities which they give in exchange. {p69}

But what if a nation has any staple commodity, such as the woollen manufacture is to England? Must not the interfering of their neighbours in that manufacture be a loss to them? I answer that when any commodity is denominated the staple of a kingdom, it is supposed that that kingdom has some peculiar and natural advantages for raising the commodity; and if, notwithstanding these advantages, they lose such a manufactory, they ought to blame their own idleness or bad government, not the industry of their neighbours. It ought also to be considered that by the increase of industry among the neighbouring nations the consumption of every particular species of commodity is also increased; and though foreign manufactures

interfere with us in the market, the demand for our product may still continue, or even increase. And even should it diminish, ought the consequence to be esteemed so fatal? If the spirit of industry be preserved, it may easily be diverted from one branch to another, and the manufactures of wool, for instance, be employed in linen, silk, iron, or other commodities for which there appears to be a demand. We need not apprehend that all the objects of industry will be exhausted, or that our manufacturers, while they remain on an equal footing with those of our neighbours, will be in danger of wanting employment; the emulation among rival nations serves rather to keep industry alive in all of them. And any people is happier who possess a variety of manufactures, than if they enjoyed one single great manufacture, in which they are all employed. Their situation is less precarious, and they will feel less sensibly those revolutions and uncertainties to which every particular branch of commerce will always be exposed.

The only commercial state which ought to dread the improvements and industry of their neighbours is such a one as Holland, which enjoying no extent of land, nor possessing any native commodity, flourishes only by being the brokers, and factors, and carriers of others. Such a people may naturally apprehend that as soon as the {p70} neighbouring states come to know and pursue their interest, they will take into their own hands the management of their affairs, and deprive their brokers of that profit which they formerly reaped from it. But though this consequence may naturally be dreaded, it is very long before it takes place; and by art and industry it may be warded off for many generations, if not wholly eluded. The advantage of superior stocks and correspondence is so great that it is not easily overcome; and as all the transactions increase by the increase of industry in the neighbouring states, even a people whose commerce stands on this precarious basis may at first reap a considerable profit from the flourishing condition of their neighbours. The Dutch, having mortgaged all their revenues, make not such a figure in political transactions as formerly; but their commerce is surely equal to what it was in the middle of the last century, when they were reckoned among the great powers of Europe.

Were our narrow and malignant politics to meet with success, we should reduce all our neighbouring nations to the same state of sloth and ignorance that prevails in Morocco and the coast of Barbary. But what would be the consequence? They could send us no commodities, they could take none from us. Our domestic commerce itself would languish for want of

emulation, example, and instruction; and we ourselves should soon fall into the same abject condition to which we had reduced them. I shall therefore venture to acknowledge that not only as a man, but as a British subject, I pray for the flourishing commerce of Germany, Spain, Italy, and even France itself. I am at least certain that Great Britain and all these nations would flourish more did their sovereigns and ministers adopt such enlarged and benevolent sentiments towards each other.

OF THE BALANCE OF POWER.

It is a question whether the *idea* of the balance of power be owing entirely to modern policy, or whether the *phrase* only has been invented in these latter ages. It is certain that Xenophon, in his institution of Cyrus, represents the combination of the Asiatic powers to have arisen from a jealousy of the increasing force of the Medes and Persians; and though that elegant composition should be supposed altogether a romance, this sentiment, ascribed by the author to the Eastern princes, is at least a proof of the prevailing notions of ancient times.

In all the politics of Greece the anxiety with regard to the balance of power is most apparent, and is expressly pointed out to us even by the ancient historians. Thucydides represents the league which was formed against Athens, and which produced the Peloponnesian war, as entirely owing to this principle. And after the decline of Athens, when the Thebans and Lacedemonians disputed for sovereignty, we find that the Athenians (as well as many other republics) threw themselves always into the lighter scale, and endeavoured to preserve the balance. They supported Thebes against Sparta, till the great victory gained by Epaminondas at Leuctra, after which they immediately went over to the conquered, from generosity as they pretended, but in reality from their jealousy of the conquerors.

Whoever will read Demosthenes' oration for the Megalopolitans may see the utmost refinements on this principle which ever entered into the head of a Venetian or English speculatist; and upon the first rise of the Macedonian power, this orator immediately discovered the danger, sounded the alarm through all Greece, and at last assembled that confederacy under the banners of Athens which fought the great and decisive battle of Chæronea. {p72}

It is true the Grecian wars are regarded by historians as wars of emulation rather than of politics, and each state seems to have had more in view the honour of leading the rest than any well-grounded hopes of

authority and dominion. If we consider, indeed, the small number of inhabitants in any one republic compared to the whole, the great difficulty of forming sieges in those times, and the extraordinary bravery and discipline of every freeman among that noble people, we shall conclude that the balance of power was of itself sufficiently secured in Greece, and needed not to be guarded with that caution which may be requisite in other ages. But whether we ascribe the shifting sides in all the Grecian republics to jealous emulation or cautious politics, the effects were alike, and every prevailing power was sure to meet with a confederacy against it, and that often composed of its former friends and allies.

The same principle—call it envy or prudence—which produced the ostracism of Athens and petalism of Syracuse, and expelled every citizen whose fame or power overtopped the rest—the same principle, I say, naturally discovered itself in foreign politics, and soon raised enemies to the leading state, however moderate in the exercise of its authority.

The Persian monarch was really, in his force, a petty prince compared to the Grecian republics, and therefore it behoved him, from views of safety more than from emulation, to interest himself in their quarrels, and to support the weaker side in every contest. This was the advice given by Alcibiades to Tissaphernes, and it prolonged near a century the date of the Persian empire; till the neglect of it for a moment, after the first appearance of the aspiring genius of Philip, brought that lofty and frail edifice to the ground with a rapidity of which there are few instances in the history of mankind.

The successors of Alexander showed an infinite jealousy of the balance of power, a jealousy founded on true politics and prudence, and which preserved distinct for several ages the partitions made after the death of that famous {p73} conqueror. The fortune and ambition of Antigonus threatened them anew with a universal monarchy, but their combination and their victory at Ipsus saved them; and in after times we find that as the Eastern princes considered the Greeks and Macedonians as the only real military force with whom they had any intercourse, they kept always a watchful eye over that part of the world. The Ptolemies, in particular, supported first Aratus and the Achæans, and then Cleomenes King of Sparta, from no other view than as a counterbalance to the Macedonian monarchs; for this is the account which Polybius gives of the Egyptian politics.

The reason why it is supposed that the ancients were entirely ignorant of the balance of power seems to be drawn from the Roman history more than the Grecian, and as the transactions of the former are generally the most familiar to us, we have thence formed all our conclusions. It must be owned that the Romans never met with any such general combination or confederacy against them as might naturally be expected from their rapid conquests and declared ambition, but were allowed peaceably to subdue their neighbours, one after another, till they extended their dominion over the whole known world. Not to mention the fabulous history of their Italic wars, there was, upon Hannibal's invasion of the Roman state, a very remarkable crisis which ought to have called up the attention of all civilized nations. It appeared afterwards (nor was it difficult to be observed at the time^[22]) that this was a contest for universal empire, and yet no prince or state seems to have been in the least alarmed about the event or issue of the quarrel. Philip of Macedon remained neuter till he saw the victories of Hannibal, and then most imprudently formed an alliance with the conqueror, upon terms still more imprudent. He stipulated that he was to assist the Carthaginian state in their conquest of Italy, after which ^{p74} they engaged to send over forces into Greece, to assist him in subduing the Grecian commonwealths.

The Rhodian and Achæan republics are much celebrated by ancient historians for their wisdom and sound policy; yet both of them assisted the Romans in their wars against Philip and Antiochus. And what may be esteemed still a stronger proof that this maxim was not familiarly known in those ages, no ancient author has ever remarked the imprudence of these measures, nor has even blamed that absurd treaty above-mentioned made by Philip with the Carthaginians. Princes and statesmen may in all ages be blinded in their reasonings with regard to events beforehand, but it is somewhat extraordinary that historians afterwards should not form a sounder judgment of them.

Massinissa, Attalus, Prusias, in satisfying their private passions, were all of them the instruments of the Roman greatness, and never seem to have suspected that they were forging their own chains while they advanced the conquests of their ally. A simple treaty and agreement between Massinissa and the Carthaginians, so much required by mutual interest, barred the Romans from all entrance into Africa, and preserved liberty to mankind.

The only prince we meet with in the Roman history who seems to have understood the balance of power is Hiero, King of Syracuse. Though the ally of Rome, he sent assistance to the Carthaginians during the war of the auxiliaries: "Esteeming it requisite," says Polybius, "both in order to retain his dominions in Sicily and to preserve the Roman friendship, that Carthage should be safe; lest by its fall the remaining power should be able, without contrast or opposition, to execute every purpose and undertaking. And here he acted with great wisdom and prudence; for that is never, on any account, to be overlooked, nor ought such a force ever to be thrown into one hand as to incapacitate the neighbouring states from defending their rights against it." Here is the aim of modern politics pointed out in express terms.

In short, the maxim of preserving the balance of power is {p75} founded so much on common sense and obvious reasoning that it is impossible it could altogether have escaped antiquity, where we find, in other particulars, so many marks of deep penetration and discernment. If it was not so generally known and acknowledged as at present, it had at least an influence on all the wiser and more experienced princes and politicians; and indeed, even at present, however generally known and acknowledged among speculative reasoners, it has not, in practice, an authority much more extensive among those who govern the world.

After the fall of the Roman Empire the form of government established by the northern conquerors incapacitated them in a great measure from further conquests, and long maintained each state in its proper boundaries; but when vassalage and the feudal militia were abolished mankind were anew alarmed by the danger of universal monarchy, from the union of so many kingdoms and principalities in the person of the Emperor Charles. But the power of the house of Austria, founded on extensive but divided dominions, and their riches, derived chiefly from mines of gold and silver, were more likely to decay, of themselves, from internal defects, than to overthrow all the bulwarks raised against them. In less than a century the force of that violent and haughty race was shattered, their opulence dissipated, their splendour eclipsed. A new power succeeded, more formidable to the liberties of Europe, possessing all the advantages of the former and labouring under none of its defects, except a share of that spirit of bigotry and persecution with which the house of Austria were so long and still are so much infatuated.

Europe has now, for above a century, remained on the defensive against the greatest force that ever perhaps was formed by the civil or political combination of mankind. And such is the influence of the maxim here treated of, that though that ambitious nation in the five last general wars has been victorious in four,[23] and unsuccessful only {p76} in one,[24] they have not much enlarged their dominions, nor acquired a total ascendant over Europe. There remains rather room to hope that by maintaining the resistance some time the natural revolutions of human affairs, together with unforeseen events and accidents, may guard us against universal monarchy, and preserve the world from so great an evil.

In the three last of these general wars Britain has stood foremost in the glorious struggle, and she still maintains her station as guardian of the general liberties of Europe, and patron of mankind. Beside her advantages of riches and situation, her people are animated with such a national spirit, and are so fully sensible of the inestimable blessings of their government, that we may hope their vigour never will languish in so necessary and so just a cause. On the contrary, if we may judge by the past, their passionate ardour seems rather to require some moderation, and they have oftener erred from a laudable excess than from a blameable deficiency.

In the first place, we seem to have been more possessed with the ancient Greek spirit of jealous emulation than actuated with the prudent views of modern politics. Our wars with France have been begun with justice, and even, perhaps, from necessity; but have always been too far pushed from obstinacy and passion. The same peace which was afterwards made at Ryswick in 1697 was offered so early as the ninety-two; that concluded at Utrecht in 1712 might have been finished on as good conditions at Gertruytenberg in the eight; and we might have given at Frankfort in 1743 the same terms which we were glad to accept of at Aix-la-Chapelle in the forty-eight. Here then we see that above half of our wars with France, and all our public debts, are owing more to our own imprudent vehemence than to the ambition of our neighbours.

In the second place, we are so declared in our opposition to French power, and so alert in defence of our allies, that {p77} they always reckon upon our force as upon their own, and expecting to carry on war at our expense, refuse all reasonable terms of accommodation. *Habent subjectos, tanquam suos; viles, ut alienos.* All the world knows that the factious vote of the House of Commons in the beginning of the last Parliament, with the

professed humour of the nation, made the Queen of Hungary inflexible in her terms, and prevented that agreement with Prussia which would immediately have restored the general tranquillity of Europe.

In the third place, we are such true combatants that, when once engaged, we lose all concern for ourselves and our posterity, and consider only how we may best annoy the enemy. To mortgage our revenues at so deep a rate in wars where we are only accessories was surely the most fatal delusion that a nation, who had any pretension to politics and prudence, has ever yet been guilty of. That remedy of funding—if it be a remedy and not rather a poison—ought, in all reason, to be reserved to the last extremity, and no evil but the greatest and most urgent should ever induce us to embrace so dangerous an expedient.

These excesses to which we have been carried are prejudicial, and may perhaps in time become still more prejudicial another way, by begetting, as is usual, the opposite extreme, and rendering us totally careless and supine with regard to the fate of Europe. The Athenians, from the most bustling, intriguing, warlike people of Greece, finding their error in thrusting themselves into every quarrel, abandoned all attention to foreign affairs, and in no contest ever took party on either side, except by their flatteries and complaisance to the victor.

Enormous monarchies are probably destructive to human nature—in their progress, in their continuance,^[25] and even in their downfall, which never can be very distant from their ^{p78} establishment. The military genius which aggrandized the monarchy soon leaves the court, the capital, and the centre of such a government; while the wars are carried on at a great distance, and interest so small a part of the state. The ancient nobility, whose affections attach them to their sovereign, live all at court; and never will accept of military employments which would carry them to remote and barbarous frontiers, where they are distant both from their pleasures and their fortune. The arms of the state must therefore be trusted to mercenary strangers, without zeal, without attachment, without honour, ready on every occasion to turn them against the prince, and join each desperate malcontent who offers pay and plunder. This is the necessary progress of human affairs; thus human nature checks itself in its airy elevations, thus ambition blindly labours for the destruction of the conqueror, of his family, and of everything near and dear to him. The Bourbons, trusting to the support of their brave, faithful, and affectionate nobility, would push their advantage without

reserve or limitation. These, while fired with glory and emulation, can bear the fatigues and dangers of war; but never would submit to languish in the garrisons of Hungary or Lithuania, forgot at court, and sacrificed to the intrigues of every minion or mistress who approaches the prince. The troops are filled with Cravates and Tartars, Hussars and Cossacks, intermingled perhaps with a few soldiers of fortune from the better provinces; and the melancholy fate of the Roman emperors, from the same cause, is renewed over and over again till the final dissolution of the monarchy.

NOTES, OF THE BALANCE OF POWER.

22 It was observed by some, as appears from the speech of Agelaus of Naupactum, in the general congress of Greece. See Polyb., lib. 5, cap. 104.

23 Those concluded by the Peace of the Pyrenees, Nimeguen, Ryswick, and Aix-la-Chapelle.

24 That concluded by the Peace of Utrecht.

25 If the Roman Empire was of advantage, it could only proceed from this, that mankind were generally in a very disorderly, uncivilized condition before its establishment.

OF TAXES.

There is a maxim that prevails among those whom in this country we call “ways and means” men, and who are denominated financiers and maltotiers in France, that every new tax creates a new ability in the subject to bear it, and {p79} that each increase of public burdens increases proportionably the industry of the people. This maxim is of such a nature as is most likely to be extremely abused, and is so much the more dangerous, as its truth cannot be altogether denied; but it must be owned, when kept within certain bounds, to have some foundation in reason and experience.

When a tax is laid upon commodities which are consumed by the common people, the necessary consequence may seem to be that either the poor must retrench something from their way of living, or raise their wages so as to make the burden of the tax fall entirely upon the rich. But there is a third consequence which very often follows upon taxes—viz., that the poor increase their industry, perform more work, and live as well as before without demanding more for their labour. Where taxes are moderate, are laid on gradually, and affect not the necessities of life, this consequence naturally follows; and it is certain that such difficulties often serve to excite the industry of a people, and render them more opulent and laborious than others who enjoy the greatest advantages. For we may observe, as a parallel instance, that the most commercial nations have not always possessed the greatest extent of fertile land; but, on the contrary, that they have laboured under many natural disadvantages. Tyre, Athens, Carthage, Rhodes, Genoa, Venice, Holland are strong examples to this purpose; and in all history we find only three instances of large and fertile countries which have possessed much trade—the Netherlands, England, and France. The two former seem to have been allured by the advantages of their maritime situation, and the necessity they lay under of frequenting foreign ports in order to procure what their own climate refused them; and as to France, trade has come very late into the kingdom, and seems to have been the effect of reflection and

observation in an ingenious and enterprising people, who remarked the immense riches acquired by such of the neighbouring nations as cultivated navigation and commerce.

The places mentioned by Cicero as possessed of the {p80} greatest commerce of his time are Alexandria, Colchos, Tyre, Sidon, Andros, Cyprus, Pamphylia, Lycia, Rhodes, Chios, Byzantium, Lesbos, Smyrna, Miletum, Coos. All these, except Alexandria, were either small islands or narrow territories; and that city owed its trade entirely to the happiness of its situation.

Since, therefore, some natural necessities or disadvantages may be thought favourable to industries, why may not artificial burdens have the same effect? Sir William Temple, [26] we may observe, ascribes the industry of the Dutch entirely to necessity, proceeding from their natural disadvantages; and illustrates his doctrine by a very striking comparison with Ireland, “where,” says he, “by the largeness and plenty of the soil, and scarcity of people, all things necessary to life are so cheap that an industrious man by two days’ labour may gain enough to feed him the rest of the week. Which I take to be a very plain ground of the laziness attributed to the people. For men naturally prefer ease before labour, and will not take pains if they can live idle; though when, by necessity, they have been inured to it, they cannot leave it, being grown a custom necessary to their health, and to their very entertainment. Nor perhaps is the change harder from constant ease to labour than from constant labour to ease.” After which the author proceeds to confirm his doctrine by enumerating as above the places where trade has most flourished in ancient and modern times, and which are commonly observed by such narrow, confined territories as beget a necessity for industry.

It is always observed in years of scarcity, if it be not extreme, that the poor labour more and really live better than in years of great plenty, when they indulge themselves in idleness and riot. I have been told by a considerable manufacturer that in the year 1740, when bread and provisions of all kinds were very dear, his workmen not only made a shift to live, but paid debts which they had {p81} contracted in former years that were much more favourable and abundant.

This doctrine, therefore, with regard to taxes may be admitted to some degree, but beware of the abuse. Exorbitant taxes, like extreme necessity, destroy industry by producing despair; and even before they reach this pitch

they raise the wages of the labourer and manufacturer, and heighten the price of all commodities. An attentive, disinterested legislature will observe the point when the emolument ceases and the prejudice begins; but as the contrary character is much more common, it is to be feared that taxes all over Europe are multiplying to such a degree as will entirely crush all art and industry; though perhaps their first increase, together with circumstances, might have contributed to the growth of these advantages.

The best taxes are such as are levied upon consumptions, especially those of luxury, because such taxes are less felt by the people. They seem, in some measure, voluntary, since a man may choose how far he will use the commodity which is taxed: they are paid gradually and insensibly, and being confounded with the natural price of the commodity, they are scarcely perceived by the consumers. Their only disadvantage is that they are expensive in the levying.

Taxes upon possessions are levied without expense, but have every other disadvantage. Most states, however, are obliged to have recourse to them, in order to supply the deficiencies of the other.

But the most pernicious of all taxes are those which are arbitrary. They are commonly converted by their management into punishments on industry; and also by their unavoidable inequality are more grievous than by the real burden which they impose. It is surprising, therefore, to see them have place among any civilized people.

In general, all poll-taxes, even when not arbitrary—which they commonly are—may be esteemed dangerous; because it is so easy for the sovereign to add a little more and a little more to the sum demanded, that these taxes are apt to become altogether oppressive and intolerable. On the {p82} other hand, a duty upon commodities checks itself, and a prince will soon find that an increase of the impost is no increase of his revenue. It is not easy, therefore, for a people to be altogether ruined by such taxes.

Historians inform us that one of the chief causes of the destruction of the Roman state was the alteration which Constantine introduced into the finances, by substituting a universal poll-tax in lieu of almost all the tithes, customs, and excises which formerly composed the revenue of the empire. The people in all the provinces were so grinded and oppressed by the publicans that they were glad to take refuge under the conquering arms of the barbarians, whose dominion, as they had fewer necessities and less art, was found preferable to the refined tyranny of the Romans.

There is a prevailing opinion that all taxes, however levied, fall upon the land at last. Such an opinion may be useful in Britain, by checking the landed gentlemen, in whose hands our legislature is chiefly lodged, and making them preserve great regard for trade and industry; but I must confess that this principle, though first advanced by a celebrated writer, has so little appearance of reason that were it not for his authority it had never been received by anybody. Every man, to be sure, is desirous of pushing off from himself the burden of any tax which is imposed, and laying it upon others; but as every man has the same inclination, and is upon the defensive, no set of men can be supposed to prevail altogether in this contest. And why the landed gentleman should be the victim of the whole, and should not be able to defend himself as well as others are, I cannot readily imagine. All tradesmen, indeed, would willingly prey upon him and divide him among them if they could; but this inclination they always have, though no taxes were levied; and the same methods by which he guards against the imposition of tradesmen before taxes will serve him afterwards, and make them share the burden with him. No labour in any commodities that are exported can be very considerably raised in the price without losing the foreign market; and as some part of almost every {p83} manufactory is exported, this circumstance keeps the price of most species of labour nearly the same after the imposition of taxes. I may add that it has this effect upon the whole, for were any kind of labour paid beyond its proportion all hands would flock to it, and would soon sink it to a level with the rest.

I shall conclude this subject with observing that we have with regard to taxes an instance of what frequently happens in political institutions, that the consequence of things are diametrically opposite to what we should expect on the first appearance. It is regarded as a fundamental maxim of the Turkish Government that the Grand Seignior, though absolute master of the lives and fortunes of each individual, has no authority to impose a new tax; and every Ottoman prince who has made such an attempt either has been obliged to retract, or has found the fatal effects of his perseverance. One would imagine that this prejudice or established opinion were the firmest barrier in the world against oppression, yet it is certain that its effect is quite contrary. The emperor, having no regular method of increasing his revenue, must allow all the pashas and governors to oppress and abuse the subjects, and these he squeezes after their return from their government; whereas, if he could impose a new tax, like our European princes, his interest would so

far be united with that of his people that he would immediately feel the bad effects of these disorderly levies of money, and would find that a pound raised by general imposition would have less pernicious effects than a shilling taken in so unequal and arbitrary a manner.

NOTE, OF TAXES.

26 *Account of the Netherlands*, chap. vi.

OF PUBLIC CREDIT.

It appears to have been the common practice of antiquity to make provision in times of peace for the necessities of war, and to hoard up treasures beforehand as the instruments either of conquest or defence, without trusting to {p84} extraordinary imposts, much less to borrowing, in times of disorder and confusion. Besides the immense sums above mentioned^[27] which were amassed by Athens, and by the Ptolemies and other successors of Alexander, we learn from Plato that the frugal Lacedemonians had also collected a great treasure; and Arrian and Plutarch^[28] specify the riches which Alexander got possession of on the conquest of Susa and Ecbatana, and which were reserved, some of them, from the time of Cyrus. If I remember right, the Scripture also mentions the treasure of Hezekiah and the Jewish princes, as profane history does that of Philip and Perseus, kings of Macedon. The ancient republics of Gaul had commonly large sums in reserve. Every one knows the treasure seized in Rome by Julius Cæsar during the civil wars, and we find afterwards that the wiser emperors, Augustus, Tiberius, Vespasian, Severus, etc., always discovered the prudent foresight of saving great sums against any public exigency.

On the contrary, our modern expedient, which has become very general, is to mortgage the public revenues, and to trust that posterity during peace will pay off the encumbrances contracted during the preceding war; and they, having before their eyes so good an example of their wise fathers, have the same prudent reliance on their posterity, who at last, from necessity more than choice, are obliged to place the same confidence in a new posterity. But not to waste time in declaiming against a practice which appears ruinous beyond the evidence of a hundred demonstrations, it seems pretty apparent that the ancient maxims are in this respect much more prudent than the modern; even though the latter had been confined within some reasonable bounds, and had ever, in any one instance, been attended with such frugality in time of peace as to discharge the debts incurred by an

expensive war. For why should the case be so very different between the public and an individual as to make {p85} us establish such different maxims of conduct for each? If the funds of the former be greater, its necessary expenses are proportionably larger; if its resources be more numerous, they are not infinite; and as its frame should be calculated for a much longer duration than the date of a single life, or even of a family, it should embrace maxims, large, durable, and generous, agreeable to the supposed extent of its existence. To trust to chances and temporary expedients is indeed what the necessity of human affairs frequently reduces it to, but whoever voluntarily depend on such resources have not necessity but their own folly to accuse for their misfortunes when any such befall them.

If the abuses of treasures be dangerous, either by engaging the state in rash enterprises or making it neglect military discipline in confidence of its riches, the abuses of mortgaging are more certain and inevitable—poverty, impotence, and subjection to foreign powers.

According to modern policy, war is attended with every destructive circumstance: loss of men, increase of taxes, decay of commerce, dissipation of money, devastation by sea and land. According to ancient maxims, the opening of the public treasure, as it produced an uncommon affluence of gold and silver, served as a temporary encouragement to industry, and atoned in some degree for the inevitable calamities of war.

What then shall we say to the new paradox, that public encumbrances are, of themselves, advantageous, independent of the necessity of contracting them; and that any state, even though it were not pressed by a foreign enemy, could not possibly have embraced a wiser expedient for promoting commerce and riches than to create funds, and debts, and taxes without limitation? Discourses such as these might naturally have passed for trials of wit among rhetoricians, like the panegyrics on folly and a fever, on Busiris and Nero, had we not seen such absurd maxims patronized by great ministers and by a whole party among us; and these puzzling arguments (for they deserve not the name of specious), though they could not be the foundation of Lord {p86} Orford's conduct, for he had more sense, served at least to keep his partisans in countenance and perplex the understanding of the nation.

Let us examine the consequences of public debts, both in our domestic management by their influence on commerce and industry, and in our foreign transactions by their effect on wars and negotiations.

There is a word which is here in the mouth of everybody, and which I find has also got abroad and is much employed by foreign writers^[29] in imitation of the English—and this is “circulation.” This word serves as an account of everything, and though I confess that I have sought for its meaning in the present subject ever since I was a schoolboy, I have never yet been able to discover it. What possible advantage is there which the nation can reap by the easy transference of stock from hand to hand? Or is there any parallel to be drawn from the circulation of other commodities to that of chequer notes and India bonds? Where a manufacturer has a quick sale of his goods to the merchant, the merchant to the shopkeeper, the shopkeeper to his customers, this enlivens industry and gives new encouragement to the first dealer or the manufacturer and all his tradesmen, and makes them produce more and better commodities of the same species. A stagnation is here pernicious, wherever it happens, because it operates backwards, and stops or benumbs the industrious hand in its production of what is useful to human life. But what production we owe to Change-alley, or even what consumption, except that of coffee, and pen, ink, and paper, I have not yet learned; nor can one foresee the loss or decay of any one beneficial commerce or commodity, though that place and all its inhabitants were for ever buried in the ocean.

But though this term has never been explained by those who insist so much on the advantages that result from a circulation, there seems, however, to be some benefit of a similar kind arising from our encumbrances—as, indeed, ^{p87} what human evil is there which is not attended with some advantage? This we shall endeavour to explain, that we may estimate the weight which we ought to allow it.

Public securities are with us become a kind of money, and pass as readily at the current price as gold or silver. Wherever any profitable undertaking offers itself, however expensive, there are never wanting hands enough to embrace it; nor need a trader who has sums in the public stocks fear to launch out into the most extensive trade, since he is possessed of funds which will answer the most sudden demand that can be made upon him. No merchant thinks it necessary to keep by him any considerable cash. Bank-notes or India bonds, especially the latter, serve all the same purposes; because he can dispose of them or pledge them to a banker in a quarter of an hour; and at the same time they are not idle, even when in his escritoire, but bring him in a constant revenue. In short, our national debts furnish

merchants with a species of money that is continually multiplying in their hands, and produces sure gain besides the profits of their commerce. This must enable them to trade upon less profit. The small profit of the merchant renders the commodity cheaper, causes a greater consumption, quickens the labour of the common people, and helps to spread arts and industry through the whole society.

There are also, we may observe, in England and in all states which have both commerce and public debts, a set of men who are half merchants, half stock-holders, and may be supposed willing to trade for small profits; because commerce is not their principal or sole support, and their revenues in the funds are a sure resource for themselves and their families. Were there no funds great merchants would have no expedient for realizing or securing any part of their profit but by making purchases of land, and land has many disadvantages in comparison of funds. Requiring more care and inspection, it divides the time and attention of the merchant; upon any tempting offer or extraordinary accident in trade, it is not so easily converted into money; and as it ^{p88} attracts too much, both by the many natural pleasures it affords and the authority it gives, it soon converts the citizen into the country gentleman. More men, therefore, with large stocks and incomes, may naturally be supposed to continue in trade where there are public debts; and this, it must be owned, is of some advantage to commerce by diminishing its profits, promoting circulation, and encouraging industry.

But, in opposition to these two favourable circumstances, perhaps of no very great importance, weigh the many disadvantages which attend our public debts in the whole interior economy of the state; you will find no comparison between the ill and the good which result from them.

First, it is certain that national debts cause a mighty confluence of people and riches to the capital, by the great sums which are levied in the provinces to pay the interest of those debts; and perhaps, too, by the advantages in trade above mentioned, which they give the merchants in the capital above the rest of the kingdom. The question is, whether, in our case, it be for the public interest that so many privileges should be conferred on London, which has already arrived at such an enormous size and seems still increasing? Some men are apprehensive of the consequences. For my part, I cannot forbear thinking that though the head is undoubtedly too big for the body, yet that great city is so happily situated that its excessive bulk causes

less inconvenience than even a smaller capital to a greater kingdom. There is more difference between the prices of all provisions in Paris and Languedoc than between those in London and Yorkshire.

Secondly, public stocks, being a kind of paper-credit, have all the disadvantages attending that species of money. They banish gold and silver from the most considerable commerce of the state, reduce them to common circulation, and by that means render all provisions and labour dearer than otherwise they would be.

Thirdly, the taxes which are levied to pay the interests of these debts are apt to be a check upon industry, to ^{p89} heighten the price of labour, and to be an oppression on the poorer sort.

Fourthly, as foreigners possess a share of our national funds, they render the public in a manner tributary to them, and may in time occasion the transport of our people and our industry.

Fifthly, the greatest part of public stock being always in the hands of idle people, who live on their revenue, our funds give great encouragement to a useless and inactive life.

But though the injury which arises to commerce and industry from our public funds will appear, upon balancing the whole, very considerable, it is trivial in comparison of the prejudice which results to the state considered as a body politic, which must support itself in the society of nations, and have various transactions with other states, in wars and negotiations. The ill there is pure and unmixed, without any favourable circumstance to atone for it, and it is an ill too of a nature the highest and most important.

We have, indeed, been told that the public is no weaker upon account of its debts, since they are mostly due among ourselves, and bring as much property to one as they take from another. It is like transferring money from the right hand to the left, which leaves the person neither richer nor poorer than before. Such loose reasonings and specious comparisons will always pass where we judge not upon principles. I ask, is it possible, in the nature of things, to overburden a nation with taxes, even where the sovereign resides among them? The very doubt seems extravagant, since it is requisite in every commonwealth that there be a certain proportion observed between the laborious and the idle part of it. But if all our present taxes be mortgaged, must we not invent new ones? and may not this matter be carried to a length that is ruinous and destructive?

In every nation there are always some methods of levying money more easy than others, agreeable to the way of living of the people and the commodities they make use of. In Britain the excises upon malt and beer afford a very large {p90} revenue, because the operations of malting and brewing are very tedious, and are impossible to be concealed; and at the same time, these commodities are not so absolutely necessary to life as that the raising their price would very much affect the poorer sort. These taxes being all mortgaged, what difficulty to find new ones! what vexation and ruin of the poor!

Duties upon consumptions are more equal and easy than those upon possessions. What a loss to the public that the former are all exhausted, and that we must have recourse to the more grievous method of levying taxes!

Were all the proprietors of land only stewards to the public, must not necessity force them to practise all the arts of oppression used by stewards, where the absence or negligence of the proprietor render them secure against inquiry?

It will scarce be asserted that no bounds ought ever to be set to national debts, and that the public would be no weaker were twelve or fifteen shillings in the pound land-tax mortgaged, with the present customs and excises. There is something therefore in the case beside the mere transferring of property from one hand to another. In 500 years the posterity of those now in the coaches and of those upon the boxes will probably have changed places, without affecting the public by these revolutions.

Suppose the public once fairly brought to that condition to which it is hastening with such amazing rapidity; suppose the land to be taxed eighteen or nineteen shillings in the pound (for it can never bear the whole twenty); suppose all the excises and customs to be screwed up to the outmost which the nation can bear, without entirely losing its commerce and industry; and suppose that all those funds are mortgaged to perpetuity, and that the invention and wit of all our projectors can find no new imposition which may serve as the foundation of a new loan; and let us consider the necessary consequences of this situation. Though the imperfect state of our political knowledge and the narrow capacities of men make it difficult to foretell the effects {p91} which will result from any untried measure, the seeds of ruin are here scattered with such profusion as not to escape the eye of the most careless observer.

In this unnatural state of society, the only persons who possess any revenue beyond the immediate effects of their industry are the stockholders, who draw almost all the rent of the land and houses, besides the produce of all the customs and excises. These are men who have no connections in the state, who can enjoy their revenue in any part of the world in which they choose to reside, who will naturally bury themselves in the capital, or in great cities, and who will sink into the lethargy of a stupid and pampered luxury, without spirit, ambition, or enjoyment. Adieu to all ideas of nobility, gentry, and family. The stocks can be transferred in an instant, and being in such a fluctuating state, will seldom be transmitted during three generations from father to son. Or were they to remain ever so long in one family, they convey no hereditary authority or credit to the possessors; and by this means, the several ranks of men, which form a kind of independent magistracy in a state, instituted by the hand of nature, are entirely lost, and every man in authority derives his influence from the commission alone of the sovereign. No expedient remains for preventing or suppressing insurrections but mercenary armies; no expedient at all remains for resisting tyranny; elections are swayed by bribery and corruption alone; and the middle power between king and people being totally removed, a horrible despotism must infallibly prevail. The landholders, despised for their poverty and hated for their oppressions, will be utterly unable to make any opposition to it.

Though a resolution should be formed by the legislature never to impose any tax which hurts commerce and discourages industry, it will be impossible for men, in subjects of such extreme delicacy, to reason so justly as never to be mistaken, or amidst difficulties so urgent, never to be seduced from their resolution. The continual fluctuations in commerce require continual alterations in the nature of the taxes, which exposes the legislature every moment to {p92} the danger both of wilful and involuntary error; and any great blow given to trade, whether by injudicious taxes or by other accidents, throws the whole system of the government into confusion.

But what expedient is the public now to fall upon, even supposing trade to continue in the most flourishing condition, to support its foreign wars and enterprises, and to defend its own honour and interests or those of its allies? I do not ask how the public is to exert such a prodigious power as it has maintained during our late wars, where we have so much exceeded, not only our own natural strength, but even that of the greatest empires. This

extravagance is the abuse complained of, as the source of all the dangers to which we are at present exposed. But since we must still suppose great commerce and opulence to remain even after every fund is mortgaged, those riches must be defended by proportionable power, and whence is the public to derive the revenue which supports it? It must plainly be from a continual taxation of the annuitants, or, which is the same thing, from mortgaging anew on every exigency a certain part of their annuity, and thus making them contribute to their own defence and to that of the nation; but the difficulties attending this system of policy will easily appear, whether we suppose the king to have become absolute master or to be still controlled by national councils, in which the annuitants themselves must necessarily bear the principal sway.

If the prince has become absolute, as may naturally be expected from this situation of affairs, it is so easy for him to increase his exactions upon the annuitants, which amount only to the retaining money in his own hands, that this species of property will soon lose all its credit, and the whole income of every individual in the state must lie entirely at the mercy of the sovereign—a degree of despotism which no oriental monarchy has ever yet attained. If, on the contrary, the consent of the annuitants be requisite for every taxation, they will never be persuaded to contribute sufficiently even to the support of government, as the {p93} diminution of their revenue must in that case be very sensible, would not be disguised under the appearance of a branch of excise or customs, and would not be shared by any other order of the state, who are already supposed to be taxed to the utmost. There are instances in some republics of a hundredth penny, and sometimes of the fiftieth, being given to the support of the state; but this is always an extraordinary exertion of power, and can never become the foundation of a constant national defence. We have always found, where a government has mortgaged all its revenues, that it necessarily sinks into a state of languor, inactivity, and impotence.

Such are the inconveniences which may reasonably be foreseen of this situation to which Great Britain is visibly tending, not to mention the numberless inconveniences which cannot be foreseen, and which must result from so monstrous a situation as that of making the public the sole proprietor of land, besides investing it with every branch of customs and excise which the fertile imagination of ministers and projectors have been able to invent.

I must confess that there is a strange supineness, from long custom, crept into all ranks of men with regard to public debts, not unlike what divines so vehemently complain of with regard to their religious doctrines. We all own that the most sanguine imagination cannot hope either that this or any future ministry will be possessed of such rigid and steady frugality as to make any considerable progress in the payment of our debts, or that the situation of foreign affairs will, for any long time, allow them leisure and tranquillity for such an undertaking.^[30] What then is to become of us? Were we ever so good Christians and ever so resigned to Providence, this, methinks, were a curious ^{p94} question, even considered as a speculative one, and what it might not be altogether impossible to form some conjectural solution of. The events here will depend little upon the contingencies of battles, negotiations, intrigues, and factions. There seems to be a natural progress of things which may guide our reasoning. As it would have required but a moderate share of prudence when we first began this practice of mortgaging to have foretold, from the nature of men and of ministers, that things would necessarily be carried to the length we see, so now that they have at last happily reached it, it may not be difficult to guess at the consequences. It must, indeed, be one of these two events—either the nation must destroy public credit, or public credit will destroy the nation. It is impossible they can both subsist after the manner they have been hitherto managed, in this as well as in some other nations.

There was indeed a scheme for the payment of our debts which was proposed by an excellent citizen, Mr. Hutchinson, above thirty years ago, and which was much approved of by some men of sense, but never was likely to take effect. He asserted that there was a fallacy in imagining that the public owed this debt, for that really every individual owed a proportional share of it, and paid, in his taxes, a proportional share of the interest, beside the expenses of levying these taxes. Had we not better, then, says he, make a proportional distribution of the debt among us, and each of us contribute a sum suitable to his property, and by that means discharge at once all our funds and public mortgages? He seems not to have considered that the laborious poor pay a considerable part of the taxes by their annual consumptions, though they could not advance at once a proportional part of the sum required; not to mention that property in money and stock in trade might ^{p95} easily be concealed or disguised, and that visible property in lands and houses would really at last answer for the whole—an inequality

and oppression which never would be submitted to. But though this project is never likely to take place, it is not altogether improbable that when the nation become heartily sick of their debts, and are cruelly oppressed by them, some daring projector may arise with visionary schemes for their discharge. And as public credit will begin, by that time, to be a little frail, the least touch will destroy it, as happened in France; and in this manner it will die of the doctor.^[31]

But it is more probable that the breach of national faith will be the necessary effect of wars, defeats, misfortunes, and public calamities, or even perhaps of victories and conquests. I must confess, when I see princes and states fighting and quarrelling, amidst their debts, funds, and public mortgages, it always brings to my mind a match of cudgel-playing fought in a china-shop. How can it be expected that sovereigns will spare a species of property which is pernicious to themselves and to the public, when they have so little compassion on lives and properties which are useful to both? Let the time come (and surely it will come) when the new funds created for the exigencies of the year are not subscribed to, and raise not the money projected. Suppose either that the cash of the nation is exhausted, or that our faith, which has hitherto been so ^{p96} ample, begins to fail us; suppose that in this distress the nation is threatened with an invasion; a rebellion is suspected or broken out at home; a squadron cannot be equipped for want of pay, victuals, or repairs; or even a foreign subsidy cannot be advanced—what must a prince or minister do in such an emergence? The right of self-preservation is unalienable in every individual, much more in every community; and the folly of our statesmen must then be greater than the folly of those who first contracted debt, or, what is more, than that of those who trusted, or continue to trust this security, if these statesmen have the means of safety in their hands and do not employ them. The funds, created and mortgaged, will by that time bring in a large yearly revenue, sufficient for the defence and security of the nation. Money is perhaps lying in the exchequer, ready for the discharge of the quarterly interest. Necessity calls, fear urges, reason exhorts, compassion alone exclaims; the money will immediately be seized for the current service—under the most solemn protestations, perhaps, of being immediately replaced. But no more is requisite; the whole fabric, already tottering, falls to the ground, and buries thousands in its ruins. And this, I think, may be called the natural death of

public credit; for to this period it tends as naturally as an animal body to its dissolution and destruction.[32] {p97}

These two events supposed above are calamitous, but not the most calamitous. Thousands are hereby sacrificed to the safety of millions; but we are not without danger that the contrary event may take place, and that millions may be sacrificed for ever to the temporary safety of thousands.[33] Our popular government perhaps will render it difficult or dangerous for a minister to venture on so desperate an expedient as that of a voluntary bankruptcy; and though the House of Lords be altogether composed of the proprietors of lands, and the House of Commons {p98} chiefly, and consequently neither of them can be supposed to have great property in the funds, yet the connections of the members may be so great with the proprietors as to render them more tenacious of public faith than prudence, policy, or even justice, strictly speaking, requires. And perhaps, too, our foreign enemies, or rather enemy (for we have but one to dread) may be so politic as to discover that our safety lies in despair, and may not therefore show the danger open and barefaced till it be inevitable. The balance of power in Europe, our grandfathers, our fathers, and we, have all justly esteemed too unequal to be preserved without our attention and assistance. But our children, weary with the struggle, and fettered with encumbrances, may sit down secure and see their neighbours oppressed and conquered, till at last they themselves and their creditors lie both at the mercy of the conqueror. And this may properly enough be denominated the violent death of our public credit.

These seem to be the events which are not very remote, and which reason foresees as clearly almost as she can do anything that lies in the womb of time. And though the ancients maintained that, in order to reach the gift of prophecy, a certain divine fury or madness was requisite, one may safely affirm that, in order to deliver such prophecies as these, no more is necessary than merely to be in one's senses, free from the influence of popular madness and delusion.

NOTES, OF PUBLIC CREDIT.

27 *Essay Of the Balance of Trade.*

28 Plut. in *Vita Alex.* He makes these treasures amount to 80,000 talents, or about 15 millions sterling. Quintus Curtius (lib. 5, cap. 2) says that Alexander found in Susa above 50,000 talents.

29 Melon, Du Tot, Law, in the pamphlets published in France.

30 In times of peace and security, when alone it is possible to pay debt, the moneyed interest are averse to receive partial payments, which they know not how to dispose of to advantage, and the landed interest are averse to continue the taxes requisite for that purpose. Why therefore should a minister persevere in a measure so disagreeable to all parties? For the sake, I suppose, of a posterity which he will never see, or of a few reasonable, reflecting people whose united interest perhaps will not be able to secure him the smallest borough in England. It is not likely we shall ever find any minister so bad a politician. With regard to these narrow, destructive maxims of politics all ministers are expert enough.

31 Some neighbouring states practise an easy expedient, by which they lighten their public debts. The French have a custom (as the Romans formerly had) of augmenting their money, and this the nation has been so much familiarized to that it hurts not public credit, though it be really cutting off at once, by an edict, so much of their debts. The Dutch diminish the interest without the consent of their creditors; or, which is the same thing, they arbitrarily tax the funds as well as other property. Could we practise either of these methods, we need never be oppressed by the national debt; and it is not impossible but one of these, or some other method, may, at all adventures, be tried, on the augmentation of our encumbrances and difficulties. But people in this country are so good reasoners upon whatever regards their interest, that such a practice will deceive nobody, and public credit will probably tumble at once by so dangerous a trial.

32 So great dupes are the generality of mankind, that notwithstanding such a violent shock to public credit as a voluntary bankruptcy in England would occasion, it would not probably be long ere credit would again revive in as flourishing a condition as before. The present King of France, during the late war, borrowed money at lower interest than ever his grandfather did, and as low as the British Parliament, comparing the natural rate of interest in both kingdoms. And though men are commonly more governed by what they have seen than by what they foresee, with whatever certainty, yet promises, protestations, fair appearances, with the allurements of present interest, have such powerful influence as few are able to resist. Mankind are, in all ages, caught by the same baits. The same tricks, played over and over again, still trepan them. The heights of popularity and patriotism are still the beaten road to power and tyranny; flattery to treachery; standing armies to arbitrary government; and the glory of God to the temporal interest of the clergy. The fear of an everlasting destruction of credit, allowing it to be an evil, is a needless bugbear. A prudent man, in reality, would rather lend to the public immediately after they had taken a sponge to their debts, than at present; as much as an opulent knave, even though one could not force him to pay, is a preferable debtor to an honest bankrupt; for the former, in order to carry on business, may find it his interest to discharge his debts, where they are not exorbitant. The latter has it not in his power. The reasoning of Tacitus (*Hist. lib. 3*), as it is eternally true, is very applicable to our present case: “Sed vulgus ad magnitudinem beneficiorum aderat: Stultissimus quisque pecuniis mercabatur: Apud sapientes cassa habebantur, quæ neque dari neque accipi, salva republica, poterant.” The public is a debtor, whom no man can oblige to pay. The only check which the creditors have on it is the interest of preserving credit; an interest which may easily be overbalanced by a very great debt, and by a difficult and extraordinary emergence, even supposing that credit irrecoverable. Not to mention that a present necessity often forces states into measures which are, strictly speaking, against their interest.

33 I have heard it has been computed that all the creditors of the public, natives and foreigners, amount only to 17,000. These make a figure at present on their income; but in case of a public bankruptcy would in an instant become the lowest, as well as the most wretched of the people. The dignity and authority of the landed gentry and nobility is much better rooted, and would render the contention very unequal, if ever we come to that extremity. One would incline to assign to this event a very near period, such as half a century, had not our fathers’ prophecies of this kind been already found fallacious by the duration of our public credit so much beyond all reasonable expectation. When the astrologers in France were every year foretelling the death of Henry IV., “These fellows,” says he, “must be right at last.” We shall therefore be more cautious than to assign any precise date, and shall content ourselves with pointing out the event in general.

OF SOME REMARKABLE CUSTOMS.

I shall observe three remarkable customs in three celebrated governments, and shall conclude from the whole that all general maxims in politics ought to be established with great reserve, and that irregular and extraordinary appearances are frequently discovered in the moral as well {p99} as in the physical world. The former perhaps can we better account for after they happen, from springs and principles of which every one has within himself, or from obvious observation, the strongest assurance and conviction; but it is often fully as impossible for human prudence beforehand to foresee and foretell them.

I. One would think it essential to every supreme council or assembly which debates, that entire liberty of speech should be granted to every member, and that all motions or reasonings should be received which can any way tend to illustrate the point under deliberation. One would conclude, with still greater assurance, that after a motion was made, which was voted and approved by that assembly in which the legislative power is lodged, the member who made the motion must for ever be exempted from further trial or inquiry. But no political maxim can at first sight appear more undisputable than that he must at least be secured from all inferior jurisdiction, and that nothing less than the same supreme legislative assembly, in their subsequent meetings, could render him accountable for those motions and harangues which they had before approved of. But these axioms, however irrefragable they may appear, have all failed in the Athenian government, from causes, and principles too, which appear almost inevitable.

By the γραφή παρανομων, or “indictment of illegality” (though it has not been remarked by antiquaries or commentators), any man was tried and punished by any common court of judicature for any law which had passed upon his motion in the assembly of the people, if that law appeared to the court unjust or prejudicial to the public. Thus Demosthenes, finding that

ship-money was levied irregularly, and that the poor bore the same burden as the rich in equipping the galleys, corrected this inequality by a very useful law, which proportioned the expense to the revenue and income of each individual. He moved for this law in the assembly, he proved its advantages,[34] he ^{p100} convinced the people, the only legislature in Athens, the law passed and was carried into execution; and yet he was tried in a criminal court for that law upon the complaint of the rich, who resented the alteration he had introduced into the finances. He was indeed acquitted upon proving anew the usefulness of his law.

Ctesiphon moved in the assembly of the people that particular honours should be conferred on Demosthenes, as on a citizen affectionate and useful to the commonwealth. The people, convinced of this truth, voted those honours; yet was Ctesiphon tried by the γραφή παρανομῶν. It was asserted, among other topics, that Demosthenes was not a good citizen, nor affectionate to the commonwealth, and the orator was called upon to defend his friend, and consequently himself, which he executed by that sublime piece of eloquence that has ever since been the admiration of mankind.

After the battle of Chæronea a law was passed, upon the motion of Hyperides, giving liberty to slaves and enrolling them in the troops.[35] On account of this law the orator was afterwards tried by the indictment above mentioned, and defended himself, among other topics, by that stroke celebrated by Plutarch and Longinus. “It was not I,” said he, “that moved for this law: it was the necessities of war; it was the battle of Chæronea.” The orations of Demosthenes abound with many instances of trials of this nature, and prove clearly that nothing was more commonly practised.

The Athenian Democracy was such a tumultuary government as we can scarce form a notion of in the present age of the world. The whole collective body of the people voted in every law without any limitation of property, without any distinction of rank, without control of any ^{p101} magistracy or senate;[36] and consequently without regard to order, justice, or prudence. The Athenians soon became sensible of the mischiefs attending this constitution, but being averse to the checking themselves by any rule or restriction, they resolved at least to check their demagogues or counsellors by the fear of future punishment and inquiry. They accordingly instituted this remarkable law, a law esteemed so essential to their government that Æschines insists on it as a known truth, that were it abolished or neglected it were impossible for the Democracy to subsist.[37]

The people feared not any ill consequence to liberty from the authority of the criminal courts, because these were nothing but very numerous juries, chosen by lot from among the people; and they considered themselves justly as in a state of perpetual pupillage, where they had an authority, after they came to the use of reason, not only to retract and control whatever had been determined, but to punish any guardian for measures which they had embraced by his persuasion. The same law had place in Thebes, and for the same reason.

It appears to have been a usual practice in Athens, on the establishment of any law esteemed very useful or popular, to prohibit for ever its abrogation and repeal. Thus the demagogue who diverted all the public revenues to the support of shows and spectacles, made it criminal so much as to move for a repeal of this law; thus Leptines moved for a law, not only to recall all the immunities formerly granted, but to deprive the people for the future of the power of granting any more; thus all bills of attainder were forbid, or laws that affected one Athenian without ^{p102} extending to the whole commonwealth. These absurd clauses, by which the legislature vainly attempted to bind itself for ever, proceeded from a universal sense of the levity and inconstancy of the people.

II. A wheel within a wheel, such as we observe in the German Empire, is considered by Lord Shaftesbury^[38] as an absurdity in politics; but what must we say to two equal wheels which govern the same political machine without any mutual check, control, or subordination, and yet preserve the greatest harmony and concord? To establish two distinct legislatures, each of which possesses full and absolute authority within itself, and stands in no need of the other's assistance, in order to give validity to its acts, this may appear beforehand altogether impracticable as long as men are actuated by the passions of ambition, emulation, and avarice, which have been hitherto their chief governing principles. And should I assert that the state I have in my eye was divided into two distinct factions, each of which predominated in a distinct legislature, and yet produced no clashing in these independent powers, the supposition may appear almost incredible; and if, to augment the paradox, I should affirm that this disjointed, irregular government was the most active, triumphant, and illustrious commonwealth that ever yet appeared on the stage of the world, I should certainly be told that such a political chimera was as absurd as any vision of the poets. But there is no

need for searching long in order to prove the reality of the foregoing suppositions, for this was actually the case with the Roman republic.

The legislative power was there lodged in the *comitia centuriata* and *comitia tributa*. In the former, it is well known, the people voted according to their census; so that when the first class was unanimous, though it contained not perhaps the hundredth part of the commonwealth, it determined the whole, and, with the authority of the senate, established a law. In the latter, every vote was alike; and as {p103} the authority of the senate was not there requisite, the lower people entirely prevailed and gave law to the whole state. In all party divisions, at first between the Patricians and Plebeians, afterwards between the nobles and the people, the interest of the aristocracy was predominant in the first legislature, that of the democracy in the second. The one could always destroy what the other had established; nay, the one by a sudden and unforeseen motion might take the start of the other and totally annihilate its rival by a vote, which, from the nature of the constitution, had the full authority of a law. But no such contest or struggle is observed in the history of Rome: no instance of a quarrel between these two legislatures, though many between the parties that governed in each. Whence arose this concord, which may seem so extraordinary?

The legislature established at Rome by the authority of Servius Tullius was the *comitia centuriata*, which, after the expulsion of the kings, rendered the government for some time altogether aristocratical. But the people, having numbers and force on their side, and being elated with frequent conquests and victories in their foreign wars, always prevailed when pushed to extremities, and first extorted from the senate the magistracy of the tribunes, and then the legislative power of the *comitia tributa*. It then behoved the nobles to be more careful than ever not to provoke the people, for beside the force which the latter were always possessed of, they had now got possession of legal authority, and could instantly break in pieces any order or institution which directly opposed them. By intrigue, by influence, by money, by combination, and by the respect paid their character, the nobles might often prevail and direct the whole machine of government; but had they openly set their *comitia centuriata* in opposition to the *tributa*, they had soon lost the advantage of that institution, together with their consuls, prætors, ediles, and all the magistrates elected by it. But the *comitia tributa*, not having the same reason for respecting the

centuriata, frequently repealed laws favourable to the aristocracy; they limited the authority of the {p104} nobles, protected the people from oppression, and controlled the actions of the senate and magistracy. The *centuriata* found it convenient always to submit; and though equal in authority, yet being inferior in power, durst never directly give any shock to the other legislature, either by repealing its laws or establishing laws, which, it foresaw, would soon be repealed by it.

No instance is found of any opposition or struggle between these *comitia*, except one slight attempt of this kind mentioned by Appian in the third book of his Civil Wars. Mark Antony, resolving to deprive Decimus Brutus of the government of Cisalpine Gaul, railed in the forum, and called one of the *comitia* in order to prevent the meeting of the other which had been ordered by the senate; but affairs were then fallen into such confusion, and the Roman constitution was so near its final dissolution, that no inference can be drawn from such an expedient. This contest, besides, was founded more on form than party. It was the senate who ordered the *comitia tributa* that they might obstruct the meeting of the *centuriata*, which, by the constitution, or at least forms of the government, could alone dispose of provinces.

Cicero was recalled by the *comitia centuriata*, though banished by the *tributa*—that is, by a *plebiscitum*. But his banishment, we may observe, never was considered as a legal deed, arising from the free choice and inclination of the people. It was always ascribed to the violence alone of Clodius, and to the disorders introduced by him into the government.

III. The third custom which we proposed to observe regards England, and though it be not so important as those which we have pointed out in Athens and Rome, it is no less singular and remarkable. It is a maxim in politics which we readily admit as undisputed and universal, that a power, however great, when granted by law to an eminent magistrate is not so dangerous to liberty as an authority, however considerable, which he acquires from violence and usurpation; for, besides that the law always limits every {p105} power which it bestows, the very receiving it as a concession establishes the authority whence it is derived and preserves the harmony of the constitution. By the same right that one prerogative is assumed without law another may also be claimed, and another with still greater facility; while the first usurpations both serve as precedents to the following, and give force to maintain them. Hence the heroism of

Hampden, who sustained the whole violence of royal prosecution rather than pay a tax of twenty shillings not imposed by Parliament; hence the care of all English patriots to guard against the first encroachments of the crown, and hence alone the existence at this day of English liberty.

There is, however, one occasion where the Parliament has departed from this maxim, and this is in the pressing of seamen. The exercise of an illegal power is here tacitly permitted in the crown, and though it has frequently been under deliberation how that power might be rendered legal and granted under proper restrictions to the sovereign, no safe expedient could ever be proposed for that purpose, and the danger to liberty always appeared greater from law than from usurpation. While this power is exercised to no other end than to man the Navy men willingly submit to it from a sense of its use and necessity, and the sailors, who are alone affected by it, find nobody to support them in claiming the rights and privileges which the law grants without distinction to all English subjects. But were this power on any occasion made an instrument of faction or ministerial tyranny, the opposite faction, and indeed all lovers of their country, would immediately take the alarm and support the injured party. The liberty of Englishmen would be asserted; juries would be implacable; and the tools of tyranny acting both against law and equity would meet with the severest vengeance. On the other hand, were the Parliament to grant such an authority, they would probably fall into one of these two inconveniences: they would either bestow it under so many restrictions as would make it lose its effects by cramping the authority of the crown, or they would render it so large and comprehensive as might give occasion {p106} to great abuses, for which we could in that case have no remedy. The very illegality of the power at present prevents its abuses, by affording so easy a remedy against them.

I pretend not by this reasoning to exclude all possibility of contriving a register for seamen, which might man the Navy without being dangerous to liberty. I only observe that no satisfactory scheme of that nature has yet been proposed. Rather than adopt any project hitherto invented, we continue a practice seemingly the most absurd and unaccountable. Authority, in times of full internal peace and concord, is armed against law. A continued and open usurpation of the crown is permitted amidst the greatest jealousy and watchfulness in the people; nay, proceeding from those very principles, liberty, in a country of the highest liberty, is left

entirely to its own defence without any countenance or protection; the wild state of nature is renewed in one of the most civilized societies of mankind; and great violences and disorders among the people, the most human and the best-natured, are committed with impunity; while the one party pleads obedience to the supreme magistrate, the other the sanction of fundamental laws.

NOTES, OF SOME REMARKABLE CUSTOMS.

34 His harangue for it is still extant: περί Συμμορίας.

35 Plutarchus in *vita decem oratorum*. Demosthenes gives a different account of this law. (*Contra Aristogiton, Orat. II.*) He says that its purport was to render the ατιμοι επιτιμοι, or to restore the privilege of bearing offices to those who had been declared incapable. Perhaps these were both clauses of the same law.

36 The senate of the Bean was only a less numerous mob chosen by lot from among the people, and their authority was not great.

37 In *Ctesiphontem*. It is remarkable that the first step after the dissolution of the Democracy by Critias and the Thirty was to annul the γραφη παρανομων, as we learn from Demosthenes κατά Τιμοκ. The orator in this oration gives us the words of the law establishing the γραφη παρανομων, p. 297, *ex edit. Aldi*. And he accounts for it from the same principles we here reason upon.

38 Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour, part 3, § 2.

OF THE POPULOUSNESS OF ANCIENT NATIONS.[39]

There is very little ground, either from reason or experience, to conclude the universe eternal or incorruptible. The continual and rapid motion of matter, the violent revolutions with which every part is agitated, the changes remarked {p107} in the heavens, the plain traces as well as tradition of a universal deluge,—all these prove strongly the mortality of this fabric of the world, and its passage, by corruption or dissolution, from one state or order to another. It must therefore, as well as each individual form which it contains, have its infancy, youth, manhood, and old age; and it is probable that in all these variations man, equally with every animal and vegetable, will partake. In the flourishing age of the world it may be expected that the human species should possess greater vigour both of mind and body, more prosperous health, higher spirits, longer life, and a stronger inclination and power of generation. But if the general system of things, and human society of course, have any such gradual revolutions, they are too slow to be discernible in that short period which is comprehended by history and tradition. Stature and force of body, length of life, even courage and extent of genius, seem hitherto to have been naturally in all ages pretty much the same. The arts and sciences, indeed, have flourished in one period and have decayed in another; but we may observe that at the time when they rose to greatest perfection among one people they were perhaps totally unknown to all the neighbouring nations, and though they universally decayed in one age, yet in a succeeding generation they again revived and diffused themselves over the world. As far, therefore, as observation reaches there is no universal difference discernible in the human species, and though it {p108} were allowed that the universe, like an animal body, had a natural progress from infancy to old age; yet, as it must still be uncertain whether at present it be advancing to its point of perfection or declining from it, we cannot thence presuppose any decay in human nature.[40] To prove, therefore, or

account for the greater populousness of antiquity by the imaginary youth or vigour of the world will scarcely be admitted by any just reasoner; these general physical causes ought entirely to be excluded from that question.

There are indeed some more particular physical causes of great importance. Diseases are mentioned in antiquity which are almost unknown to modern medicine, and new diseases have arisen and propagated themselves of which there are no traces in ancient history. And in this particular we may observe, upon comparison, that the disadvantage is very much on the side of the moderns. Not to mention some others of less importance, the smallpox commits such ravages as would almost alone account for the great superiority ascribed to ancient times. The tenth or the twelfth part of mankind destroyed every generation should make a vast difference, it may be thought, in the numbers of the people; and when joined to venereal distempers, a new plague diffused everywhere, this disease is perhaps equivalent, by its constant operation, to the three great scourges of mankind—war, pestilence, and famine. Were it certain, therefore, that ancient times were more populous than the present, and could no moral causes be assigned for so great a change, these physical causes alone, in the opinion of many, would be sufficient to give us satisfaction on that head. {p109}

But is it certain that antiquity was so much more populous as is pretended? The extravagancies of Vossius with regard to this subject are well known; but an author of much greater genius and discernment has ventured to affirm that, according to the best computations which these subjects will admit of, there are not now on the face of the earth the fiftieth part of mankind which existed in the time of Julius Cæsar. It may easily be observed that the comparisons in this case must be very imperfect, even though we confine ourselves to the scene of ancient history—Europe and the nations about the Mediterranean. We know not exactly the numbers of any European kingdom, or even city, at present; how can we pretend to calculate those of ancient cities and states where historians have left us such imperfect traces? For my part, the matter appears to me so uncertain that, as I intend to throw together some reflections on that head, I shall intermingle the inquiry concerning causes with that concerning facts, which ought never to be admitted where the facts can be ascertained with any tolerable assurance. We shall first consider whether it be probable, from what we know of the situation of society in both periods, that antiquity must have

been more populous; secondly, whether in reality it was so. If I can make it appear that the conclusion is not so certain as is pretended in favour of antiquity, it is all I aspire to.

In general we may observe that the question with regard to the comparative populousness of ages or kingdoms implies very important consequences, and commonly determines concerning the preference of their whole police, their manners, and the constitution of their government. For as there is in all men, both male and female, a desire and power of generation more active than is ever universally exerted, the restraints which they lie under must proceed from some difficulties in their situation, which it belongs to a wise legislature carefully to observe and remove. Almost every man who thinks he can maintain a family will have one, and the human species at this rate of propagation would more than double every generation. How fast do {p110} mankind multiply in every colony or new settlement, where it is an easy matter to provide for a family, and where men are nowise straightened or confined as in long established governments? History tells us frequently of plagues which have swept away the third or fourth part of a people; yet in a generation or two the destruction was not perceived, and the society had again acquired their former number. The lands which were cultivated, the houses built, the commodities raised, the riches acquired, enabled the people who escaped immediately to marry and to rear families, which supplied the place of those who had perished.^[41] And for a like reason every wise, just, and mild government, by rendering the condition of its subjects easy and secure, will always abound most in people, as well as in commodities and riches. A country, indeed, whose climate and soil are fitted for vines will naturally be more populous than one which is only fitted for pasturage; but if everything else be equal, it seems natural to expect that wherever there are most happiness and virtue and the wisest institutions, there will also be most people.

The question, therefore, concerning the populousness of ancient and modern times being allowed of great importance, it will be requisite, if we would bring it to some determination, to compare both the domestic and political situation of these two periods, in order to judge of the facts by their moral causes, which is the first view in which we proposed to consider them.

The chief difference between the domestic economy of the ancients and that of the moderns consists in the practice of slavery which prevailed among the former, and which has been abolished for some centuries throughout the greater part of Europe. Some passionate admirers of {p111} the ancients and zealous partisans of civil liberty (for these sentiments, as they are both of them in the main extremely just, are found to be almost inseparable) cannot forbear regretting the loss of this institution; and whilst they brand all submission to the government of a single person with the harsh denomination of slavery, they would gladly reduce the greatest part of mankind to real slavery and subjection. But to one who considers coolly on the subject it will appear that human nature in general really enjoys more liberty at present, in the most arbitrary governments of Europe, than it ever did during the most flourishing period of ancient times. As much as submission to a petty prince, whose dominions extend not beyond a single city, is more grievous than obedience to a great monarch, so much is domestic slavery more cruel and oppressive than any civil subjection whatsoever. The more the master is removed from us in place and rank the greater liberty we enjoy, the less are our actions inspected and controlled, and the fainter that cruel comparison becomes between our own subjection and the freedom and even dominion of another. The remains that are found of slavery in the American colonies and among some European nations would never surely create a desire of rendering it more universal. The little humanity commonly observed in persons accustomed from their infancy to exercise so great authority over their fellow-creatures and to trample upon human nature were sufficient alone to disgust us with that authority. Nor can a more probable reason be given for the severe, I might say barbarous manners of ancient times, than the practice of domestic slavery, by which every man of rank was rendered a petty tyrant and educated amidst the flattery, submission, and low debasement of his slaves.

According to the ancient practice, all checks were on the inferior, to restrain him to the duty of submission; none on the superior, to engage him to the reciprocal duties of gentleness and humanity. In modern times a bad servant finds not easily a good master, nor a bad master a good servant, and the checks are mutual, {p112} suitable to the inviolable and eternal laws of reason and equity.

The custom of exposing old, useless, or sick slaves in an island of the Tiber, there to starve, seems to have been pretty common in Rome, and

whoever recovered after having been so exposed had his liberty given him by an edict of the Emperor Claudius, where it was likewise forbid to kill any slave merely for old age or sickness. But supposing that this edict was strictly obeyed, would it better the domestic treatment of slaves or render their lives much more comfortable? We may imagine what others would practise when it was the professed maxim of the elder Cato to sell his superannuated slaves for any price rather than maintain what he esteemed a useless burden.

The *ergastula*, or dungeons, where slaves in chains were forced to work, were very common all over Italy. Columella advises that they be always built under ground, and recommends it as the duty of a careful overseer to call over every day the names of these slaves, like the mustering of a regiment or ship's company, in order to know presently when any of them had deserted. A proof of the frequency of these *ergastula* and of the great number of slaves usually confined in them.

A chained slave for a porter was usual in Rome, as appears from Ovid and other authors. Had not these people shaken off all sense of compassion towards that unhappy part of their species, would they have presented all their friends at the first entrance with such an image of the severity of the master and misery of the slave?

Nothing so common in all trials, even of civil causes, as to call for the evidence of slaves, which was always extorted by the most exquisite torments. Demosthenes says that where it was possible to produce for the same fact either freemen or slaves as witnesses, the judges always preferred the torturing of slaves as a more certain and infallible evidence.[42] {p113}

Seneca draws a picture of that disorderly luxury which changes day into night and night into day, and inverts every stated hour of every office in life. Among other circumstances, such as displacing the meals and times of bathing, he mentions that regularly about the third hour of the night the neighbours of one who indulges this false refinement hear the noise of whips and lashes, and upon inquiry find that he is then taking an account of the conduct of his servants and giving them due correction and discipline. This is not remarked as an instance of cruelty, but only of disorder, which, even in actions the most usual and methodical, changes the fixed hours that an established custom had assigned them.[43]

But our present business is only to consider the influence of slavery on the populousness of a state. It is pretended that in this particular the ancient

practice had infinitely the advantage, and was the chief cause of that extreme populousness which is supposed in those times. At present all masters discourage the marrying of their male servants, and admit not by any means the marriage of the female, who are then supposed altogether incapacitated for their service; but where the property of the servants is lodged in the master, their marriage and fertility form his riches, and bring him a succession of slaves that supply the {p114} place of those whom age and infirmity have disabled. He encourages, therefore, their propagation as much as that of his cattle, rears the young with the same care, and educates them to some art or calling, which may render them more useful or valuable to him. The opulent are, by this policy, interested in the being at least, though not the well-being of the poor; and enrich themselves by increasing the number and industry of those who are subjected to them. Each man, being a sovereign in his own family, has the same interest with regard to it as the prince with regard to the state; and has not, like the prince, any opposite motive of ambition or vainglory which may lead him to depopulate his little sovereignty. All of it is, at all times, under his eye, and he has leisure to inspect the most minute detail of the marriage and education of his subjects.[44]

Such are the consequences of domestic slavery, according to the first aspect and appearance of things; but if we enter more deeply into the subject, we shall perhaps find reason to retract our hasty determinations. The comparison is shocking between the management of human creatures and that of cattle; but being extremely just when applied to the present subject, it may be proper to trace the consequences of it. At the capital, near all great cities, in all populous, rich, industrious provinces, few cattle are bred. Provisions, lodging, attendance, labour are there dear, and men find better their account in buying the cattle, after they come to a certain age, from the remoter and cheaper countries. These are consequently the only breeding countries for cattle; and by a parity of reason, for men too, when the latter are put on the same footing with the {p115} former. To rear a child in London till he could be serviceable would cost much dearer than to buy one of the same age from Scotland or Ireland, where he had been raised in a cottage, covered with rags, and fed on oatmeal or potatoes. Those who had slaves, therefore, in all the richer or more populous countries would discourage the pregnancy of the females, and either prevent or destroy the birth. The human species would perish in those places where it ought to

increase the fastest, and a perpetual recruit be needed from all the poorer and more desert provinces. Such a continued drain would tend mightily to depopulate the state, and render great cities ten times more destructive than with us, where every man is master of himself, and provides for his children from the powerful instinct of nature—not the calculations of sordid interest. If London at present, without increasing, needs a yearly recruit from the country of 5000 people, as is commonly computed, what must it require if the greatest part of the tradesmen and common people were slaves, and were hindered from breeding by their avaricious masters?

All ancient authors tell us that there was a perpetual flux of slaves to Italy from the remoter provinces, particularly Syria, Cilicia,[45] Cappadocia, and the Lesser Asia, Thrace, and Egypt; yet the number of people did not increase in Italy, and writers complain of the continual decay of industry and agriculture. Where then is that extreme fertility of the Roman slaves which is commonly supposed? So far from multiplying, they could not, it seems, so much as keep up the stock without immense recruits. And though great numbers were continually manumitted and converted into Roman citizens, the numbers even of these did not increase till the freedom of the city was communicated to foreign provinces.

The term for a slave born and bred in the family was {p116} *verna*;^[46] and these slaves seem to have been entitled by custom to privileges and indulgences beyond others—a sufficient reason why the masters would not be fond of rearing many of that kind.^[47] Whoever is acquainted with the maxims of our planters will acknowledge the justness of this observation.

[48] {p117}

Atticus is much praised by his historian for the care which he took in recruiting his family from the slaves born in it.^[49] May we not thence infer that that practice was not then very common?

The names of slaves in the Greek comedies—Syrus, Mysus, Geta, Thrax, Davus, Lydus, Phyrx, etc., afford a presumption that at Athens, at least, most of the slaves were imported from foreign nations. The Athenians, says Strabo, gave to their slaves either the names of the nations whence they were bought, as Lydus, Syrus; or the names that were most common among those nations, as Manes or Midas to a Phrygian, Tibias to a Paphlagonian.

Demosthenes, after having mentioned a law which forbid any man to strike the slave of another, praises the humanity of this law, and adds that if

the barbarians from whom slaves were bought had information that their countrymen met with such gentle treatment, they would entertain a great esteem for the Athenians. Isocrates, too, insinuates that the slaves of the Greeks were generally or very commonly barbarians. Aristotle, in his *Politics*, plainly supposes that a slave is always a foreigner. The ancient comic writers represented the slaves as speaking a barbarous language. This was an imitation of nature.

It is well known that Demosthenes, in his nonage, had been defrauded of a large fortune by his tutors, and that afterwards he recovered, by a prosecution of law, the value of his patrimony. His orations on that occasion still remain, and contain a very exact detail of the whole substance left by his father, in money, merchandise, houses, and slaves, together with the value of each particular. Among the rest were 52 slaves, handicraftsmen—viz., 32 sword-cutlers and 20 cabinet-makers,[50] all males; not a word of any wives, children, or family, which they {p118} certainly would have had had it been a common custom at Athens to breed from the slaves; and the value of the whole must have depended very much on that circumstance. No female slaves are even so much as mentioned, except some housemaids who belonged to his mother. This argument has great force, if it be not altogether decisive.

Consider this passage of Plutarch, speaking of the elder Cato:—“He had a great number of slaves, whom he took care to buy at the sales of prisoners of war; and he chose them young, that they might easily be accustomed to any diet or manner of life, and be instructed in any business or labour, as men teach anything to young dogs or horses. And esteeming love the chief source of all disorders, he allowed the male slaves to have a commerce with the female in his family, upon paying a certain sum for this privilege; but he strictly forbade all intrigues out of his family.” Are there any symptoms in this narration of that care which is supposed in the ancients, of the marriage and propagation of their slaves? If that was a common practice, founded on general interest, it would surely have been embraced by Cato, who was a great economist, and lived in times when the ancient frugality and simplicity of manners were still in credit and reputation.

It is expressly remarked by the writers of the Roman law that scarce any ever purchase slaves with a view of breeding from them.[51] {p119}

Our lackeys and housemaids, I own, do not serve much to multiply their species; but the ancients, besides those who attended on their person, had

all their labour performed by slaves, who lived, many of them, in their family; and some great men possessed to the number of 10,000. If there be any suspicion, therefore, that this institution was unfavourable to propagation (and the same reason, at least in part, holds with regard to ancient slaves as well as modern servants), how destructive must slavery have proved!

History mentions a Roman nobleman who had 400 slaves under the same roof with him; and having been assassinated at home by the furious revenge of one of them, the law was executed with rigour, and all without exception were put to death. Many other Roman noblemen had families equally, or more numerous, and I believe every one will allow that this would scarcely be practicable were we to suppose all the slaves married and the females to be breeders.[52]

So early as the poet Hesiod married slaves, whether male or female, were esteemed very inconvenient. How much more where families had increased to such an enormous size, as in Rome, and where simplicity of manners was banished from all ranks of people?

Xenophon in his *Economics*, where he gives directions for the management of a farm, recommends a strict care {p120} and attention of laying the male and the female slaves at a distance from each other. He seems not to suppose that they are ever married. The only slaves among the Greeks that appear to have continued their own breed were the Helotes, who had houses apart, and were more the slaves of the public than of individuals.

The same author tells us that Nicias's overseer, by an agreement with his master, was obliged to pay him an obolus a day for each slave, besides maintaining them and keeping up the number. Had the ancient slaves been all breeders, this last circumstance of the contract had been superfluous.

The ancients talk so frequently of a fixed, stated portion of provisions assigned to each slave, that we are naturally led to conclude that slaves lived almost all single, and received that portion as a kind of board-wages.

The practice, indeed, of marrying the slaves seems not to have been very common even among the country-labourers, where it is more naturally to be expected. Cato, enumerating the slaves requisite to labour a vineyard of a hundred acres, makes them to amount to fifteen—the overseer and his wife (*villicus* and *villica*) and thirteen male slaves; for an olive plantation of

240 acres, the overseer and his wife and eleven male slaves; and so in proportion to a greater or less plantation or vineyard.

Varro, citing this passage of Cato, allows his computation to be just in every respect except the last. "For as it is requisite," says he, "to have an overseer and his wife, whether the vineyard or plantation be great or small, this must alter the exactness of the proportion." Had Cato's computation been erroneous in any other respect it had certainly been corrected by Varro, who seems fond of discovering so trivial an inaccuracy.

The same author, as well as Columella, recommends it as requisite to give a wife to the overseer in order to attach him the more strongly to his master's service. This was therefore a peculiar indulgence granted to a slave in whom so great a confidence was reposed. {p121}

In the same place Varro mentions it as a useful precaution not to buy too many slaves from the same nations, lest they beget factions and seditions in the family; a presumption that in Italy the greatest part, even of the country-labouring slaves—for he speaks of no other—were bought from the remoter provinces. All the world knows that the family-slaves in Rome, who were instruments of show and luxury, were commonly imported from the east. "Hoc profecere," says Pliny, speaking of the jealous care of masters, "mancipiorum legiones, et in domo turba externa ac servorum quoque causa nomenclator adhibendus."

It is indeed recommended by Varro to propagate young shepherds in the family from the old ones; for as grazing farms were commonly in remote and cheap places, and each shepherd lived in a cottage apart, his marriage and increase were not liable to the same inconveniences as in dearer places and where many servants lived in a family, which was universally the case in such of the Roman farms as produced wine or corn. If we consider this exception with regard to the shepherds, and weigh the reasons of it, it will serve for a strong confirmation of all our foregoing suspicions.

Columella, I own, advises the master to give a reward, and even liberty to a female slave that had reared him above three children, a proof that sometimes the ancients propagated from their slaves, which, indeed, cannot be denied. Were it otherwise the practice of slavery, being so common in antiquity, must have been destructive to a degree which no expedient could repair. All I pretend to infer from these reasonings is that slavery is in general disadvantageous both to the happiness and populousness of

mankind, and that its place is much better supplied by the practice of hired servants.

The laws, or, as some writers call them, the seditions of the Gracchi, were occasioned by their observing the increase of slaves all over Italy, and the diminution of free citizens. Appian ascribes this increase to the propagation of the slaves; Plutarch to the purchasing of {p122} barbarians, who were chained and imprisoned, βαρβαρικά δεσμωτηρία. It is to be presumed that both causes concurred.

Sicily, says Florus, was full of *ergastula*, and was cultivated by labourers in chains. Eunus and Athenio excited the servile war by breaking up these monstrous prisons and giving liberty to 60,000 slaves. The younger Pompey augmented his army in Spain by the same expedient. If the country-labourers throughout the Roman Empire were so generally in this situation, and if it was difficult or impossible to find separate lodgings for the families of the city-servants, how unfavourable to propagation, as well as to humanity, must the institution of domestic slavery be esteemed.

Constantinople at present requires the same recruits of slaves from all the provinces which Rome did of old, and these provinces are of consequence far from being populous.

Egypt, according to Monsieur Maillet, sends continual colonies of black slaves to the other parts of the Turkish Empire, and receives annually an equal return of white; the one brought from the inland parts of Africa, the other from Mingrella, Circassia, and Tartary.

Our modern convents are no doubt very bad institutions, but there is reason to suspect that anciently every great family in Italy, and probably in other parts of the world, was a species of convent. And though we have reason to detest all those popish institutions as nurseries of the most abject superstition, burdensome to the public and oppressive to the poor prisoners, male as well as female, yet may it be questioned whether they be so destructive to the populousness of a state as is commonly imagined. Were the land which belongs to a convent bestowed on a nobleman, he would spend its revenue on dogs, horses, grooms, footmen, cooks, and housemaids, and his family would not furnish many more citizens than the convent.

The common reason why parents thrust their daughters into nunneries is that they may not be overburdened with {p123} too numerous a family; but the ancients had a method almost as innocent and more effectual to that purpose

—viz., the exposing their children in the earliest infancy. This practice was very common, and is not mentioned by any author of those times with the horror it deserves, or scarce[53] even with disapprobation. Plutarch—the humane, good-natured Plutarch[54]—recommends it as a virtue in Attalus, King of Pergamus, that he murdered, or, if you will, exposed all his own children in order to leave his crown to the son of his brother, Eumenes, signalling in this manner his gratitude and affection to Eumenes, who had left him his heir preferable to that son. It was Solon, the most celebrated of the sages of Greece, who gave parents permission by law to kill their children.

Shall we then allow these two circumstances to compensate each other—viz., monastic vows and the exposing of children, and to be unfavourable in equal degrees to the propagation of mankind? I doubt the advantage is here on the side of antiquity. Perhaps, by an odd connection of causes, the barbarous practice of the ancients might rather render those times more populous. By removing the terrors of too numerous a family it would engage many people in marriage, and such is the force of natural affection that very few in comparison would have resolution enough to carry into execution their former intentions.

China, the only country where this cruel practice of exposing children prevails at present, is the most populous country we know, and every man is married before he is twenty. Such early marriages could scarcely be general had not men the prospect of so easy a method of getting rid of their children. I own that Plutarch speaks of it as a very universal maxim of the poor to expose their children, and as the rich were then averse to marriage on account of the courtship they met with from those who expected legacies {p124} from them, the public must have been in a bad situation between them.

[55]

Of all sciences there is none where first appearances are more deceitful than in politics. Hospitals for foundlings seem favourable to the increase of numbers, and perhaps may be so when kept under proper restrictions; but when they open the door to every one, without distinction, they have probably a contrary effect, and are pernicious to the state. It is computed that every ninth child born at Paris is sent to the hospital, though it seems certain, according to the common course of human affairs, that it is not a hundredth part whose parents are altogether incapacitated to rear and educate them. The infinite difference, for health, industry, and morals,

between an education in an hospital and that in a private family should induce us not to make the entrance into an hospital too easy and engaging. To kill one's own child is shocking to nature, and must therefore be pretty unusual; but to turn over the care of him upon others is very tempting to the natural indolence of mankind.

Having considered the domestic life and manners of the ancients compared to those of the moderns, where in the main we seem rather superior so far as the present question is concerned, we shall now examine the political customs and institutions of both ages, and weigh their influence in retarding or forwarding the propagation of mankind.

Before the increase of the Roman power, or rather till its full establishment, almost all the nations which are the scene of ancient history were divided into small territories or petty {p125} commonwealths, where of course a great equality of fortune prevailed, and the centre of the government was always very near its frontiers.

This was the situation of affairs not only in Greece and Italy, but also in Spain, Gaul, Germany, Africa, and a great part of the Lesser Asia. And it must be owned that no institution could be more favourable to the propagation of mankind; for though a man of an overgrown fortune, not being able to consume more than another, must share it with those who serve and attend him, yet their possession being precarious, they have not the same encouragement to marriage as if each had a small fortune secure and independent. Enormous cities are, besides, destructive to society, beget vice and disorder of all kinds, starve the remoter provinces, and even starve themselves by the prices to which they raise all provisions. Where each man had his little house and field to himself, and each county had its capital, free and independent, what a happy situation of mankind! How favourable to industry and agriculture, to marriage and propagation! The prolific virtue of men, were it to act in its full extent, without that restraint which poverty and necessity imposes on it, would double the number every generation; and nothing surely can give it more liberty than such small commonwealths, and such an equality of fortune among the citizens. All small states naturally produce equality of fortune because they afford no opportunities of great increase, but small commonwealths much more by that division of power and authority which is essential to them.

When Xenophon returned after the famous expedition with Cyrus, he hired himself and 6000 of the Greeks into the service of Seuthes, a prince of

Thrace; and the articles of his agreement were that each soldier should receive a daric a month, each captain two darics, and he himself, as general, four; a regulation of pay which would not a little surprise our modern officers.

Demosthenes and Æschines, with eight more, were sent ambassadors to Philip of Macedon, and their appointments {p126} for above four months were a thousand drachmas, which is less than a drachma a day for each ambassador. But a drachma a day—nay, sometimes two, was the pay of a common foot-soldier.

A centurion among the Romans had only double pay to a private man in Polybius's time, and we accordingly find the gratuities after a triumph regulated by that proportion. But Mark Anthony and the triumvirate gave the centurions five times the reward of the other; so much had the increase of the commonwealth increased the inequality among the citizens.[56]

It must be owned that the situation of affairs in modern times with regard to civil liberty, as well as equality of fortune, is not near so favourable either to the propagation or happiness of mankind. Europe is shared out mostly into great monarchies, and such parts of it as are divided into small territories are commonly governed by absolute princes, who ruin their people by a mimicry of the greater monarchs in the splendour of their court and number of their forces. Switzerland alone and Holland resemble the ancient republics, and though the former is far from possessing any advantage either of soil, climate, or commerce, yet the numbers of people with which it abounds, notwithstanding their enlisting themselves into every service in Europe, prove sufficiently the advantages of their political institutions.

The ancient republics derived their chief or only security from the numbers of their citizens. The Trachinians having lost great numbers of their people, the remainder, instead of enriching themselves by the inheritance of their fellow-citizens, applied to Sparta, their metropolis, for a new stock of inhabitants. The Spartans immediately collected ten thousand men, among whom the old citizens divided the lands of which the former proprietors had perished.

After Timoleon had banished Dionysius from Syracuse {p127} and had settled the affairs of Sicily, finding the cities of Syracuse and Sellinuntium extremely depopulated by tyranny, war, and faction, he invited over from Greece some new inhabitants to repeople them. Immediately forty thousand

men (Plutarch says sixty thousand) offered themselves, and he distributed so many lots of land among them, to the great satisfaction of the ancient inhabitants; a proof at once of the maxims of ancient policy, which affected populousness more than riches, and of the good effects of these maxims in the extreme populousness of that small country Greece, which could at once supply so large a colony. The case was not much different with the Romans in early times. "He is a pernicious citizen," said M. Curius, "who cannot be contented with seven acres."^[57] Such ideas of equality could not fail of producing great numbers of people.

We must now consider what disadvantages the ancients lay under with regard to populousness, and what checks they received from their political maxims and institutions. There are commonly compensations in every human condition, and though these compensations be not always perfectly equal, yet they serve, at least, to restrain the prevailing principle. To compare them and estimate their influence is indeed very difficult, even where they take place in the same age, and in neighbouring countries; but where several ages have intervened, and only scattered lights are afforded us by ancient authors, what can we do but amuse ourselves by talking, *pro* and *con*, on an interesting subject, and thereby correcting all hasty and violent determinations? {p128}

First, we may observe that the ancient republics were almost in perpetual war, a natural effect of their martial spirit, their love of liberty, their mutual emulation, and that hatred which generally prevails among nations that live in a close neighbourhood. Now, war in a small state is much more destructive than in a great one, both because all the inhabitants in the former case must serve in the armies, and because the state is all frontier and all exposed to the inroads of the enemy.

The maxims of ancient war were much more destructive than those of modern, chiefly by the distribution of plunder, in which the soldiers were indulged. The private men in our armies are such a low set of people that we find any abundance beyond their simple pay breeds confusion and disorder, and a total dissolution of discipline. The very wretchedness and meanness of those who fill the modern armies render them less destructive to the countries which they invade; one instance, among many, of the deceitfulness of first appearances in all political reasonings.^[58]

Ancient battles were much more bloody by the very nature of the weapons employed in them. The ancients drew up their men sixteen or

twenty, sometimes fifty men deep, which made a narrow front, and it was not difficult to find a field in which both armies might be marshalled and might engage with each other. Even where any body of the troops was kept off by hedges, hillocks, woods, or hollow ways, the battle was not so soon decided between the contending parties but that the others had time to overcome the difficulties which opposed them and take part in the engagement. And as the whole armies were thus engaged, and each man closely buckled to his antagonist, the battles were commonly very bloody, and great slaughter was made on both sides, especially on the vanquished. {p129} The long thin lines required by firearms, and the quick decision of the fray, render our modern engagements but partial rencounters, and enable the general who is foiled in the beginning of the day to draw off the greatest part of his army, sound and entire. Could Folard's project of the column take place (which seems impracticable^[59]) it would render modern battles as destructive as the ancient.

The battles of antiquity, both by their duration and their resemblance of single combats, were wrought up to a degree of fury quite unknown to later ages. Nothing could then engage the combatants to give quarter but the hopes of profit by making slaves of their prisoners. In civil wars, as we learn from Tacitus, the battles were the most bloody, because the prisoners were not slaves.

What a stout resistance must be made where the vanquished expected so hard a fate! How inveterate the rage where the maxims of war were, in every respect, so bloody and severe!

Instances are very frequent in ancient history of cities besieged whose inhabitants, rather than open their gates, murdered their wives and children, and rushed themselves on a voluntary death, sweetened perhaps with a little prospect of revenge upon the enemy. Greeks as well as barbarians have been often wrought up to this degree of fury. And the same determined spirit and cruelty must, in many other instances less remarkable, have been extremely destructive to human society in those petty commonwealths which lived in a close neighbourhood, and were engaged in perpetual wars and contentions.

Sometimes the wars in Greece, says Plutarch, were carried on entirely by inroads and robberies and piracies. Such a method of war must be more destructive in small states than the bloodiest battles and sieges.

By the laws of the twelve tables, possession for two years {p130} formed a prescription for land; one year for movables;[60] an indication that there was not in Italy during that period much more order, tranquillity, and settled police than there is at present among the Tartars.

The only cartel I remember in ancient history is that between Demetrius Poliorcetes and the Rhodians, when it was agreed that a free citizen should be restored for 1000 drachmas, a slave bearing arms for 500.

But, secondly, it appears that ancient manners were more unfavourable than the modern, not only in times of war but also in those of peace; and that too in every respect, except the love of civil liberty and equality, which is, I own, of considerable importance. To exclude faction from a free government is very difficult, if not altogether impracticable; but such inveterate rage between the factions and such bloody maxims are found, in modern times, amongst religious parties alone, where bigoted priests are the accusers, judges, and executioners. In ancient history we may always observe, where one party prevailed, whether the nobles or people (for I can observe no difference in this respect[61]), that they immediately butchered all of the opposite party who fell into their hands, and banished such as had been so fortunate as to escape their fury. No form of process, no law, no trial, no pardon. A fourth, a third, perhaps near a half of the city were slaughtered or expelled every revolution; and the exiles always joined foreign enemies and did all the mischief possible to their fellow-citizens, till fortune put it in their power to take full revenge by a new revolution. And as these were very frequent in such violent governments, the disorder, diffidence, jealousy, enmity which must prevail are not easy for us to imagine in this age of the world. {p131}

There are only two revolutions I can recollect in ancient history which passed without great severity and great effusion of blood in massacres and assassinations—viz., the restoration of the Athenian democracy by Thrasybulus, and the subduing the Roman republic by Cæsar. We learn from ancient history that Thrasybulus passed a general amnesty for all past offences, and first introduced that word as well as practice into Greece. It appears, however, from many orations of Lysias, that the chief, and even some of the subaltern offenders in the preceding tyranny were tried and capitally punished. This is a difficulty not cleared up, and even not observed by antiquarians and historians. And as to Cæsar's clemency, though much celebrated, it would not gain great applause in the present age. He

butchered, for instance, all Cato's senate, when he became master of Utica; and these, we may readily believe, were not the most worthless of the party. All those who had borne arms against that usurper were forfeited, and, by Hirtius's law, declared incapable of all public offices.

These people were extremely fond of liberty, but seem not to have understood it very well. When the Thirty Tyrants first established their dominion at Athens, they began with seizing all the sycophants and informers who had been so troublesome during the Democracy, and putting them to death by an arbitrary sentence and execution. "Every man," says Sallust and Lysias,[62] "rejoiced at these punishments;" not considering that liberty was from that moment annihilated.

The utmost energy of the nervous style of Thucydides, and the copiousness and expression of the Greek language, seem to sink under that historian when he attempts to describe the disorders which arose from faction throughout {p132} all the Greek commonwealths. You would imagine that he still labours with a thought greater than he can find words to communicate, and he concludes his pathetic description with an observation which is at once very refined and very solid. "In these contests," says he, "those who were dullest and most stupid, and had the least foresight, commonly prevailed; for being conscious of this weakness, and dreading to be over-reached by those of greater penetration, they went to work hastily, without premeditation, by the sword and poniard, and thereby prevented their antagonists, who were forming fine schemes and projects for their destruction." [63]

Not to mention Dionysius the elder, who is computed to have butchered in cold blood above 10,000 of his fellow-citizens, nor Agathocles, Nabis, and others still more bloody than he, the transactions, even in free governments, were extremely violent and destructive. At Athens, the Thirty Tyrants and the nobles in a twelvemonth murdered, without trial, about 1200 of the people, and banished above the half of the citizens that remained.[64] In Argos, near the same time, the people killed 1200 of the nobles, and afterwards their own demagogues, because they had refused to carry their prosecutions further. The people also in Corcyra killed 1500 of the nobles and banished a thousand. These numbers will appear the more surprising if we {p133} consider the extreme smallness of these states. But all ancient history is full of such instances.[65]

When Alexander ordered all the exiles to be restored through all the cities, it was found that the whole amounted to 20,000 men, the remains probably of still greater slaughters and massacres. What an astonishing multitude in so narrow a country as ancient Greece! And what domestic confusion, jealousy, partiality, revenge, heart-burnings must tear those cities, where factions were wrought up to such a degree of fury and despair!

“It would be easier,” says Isocrates to Philip, “to raise ^{p134} an army in Greece at present from the vagabonds than from the cities.”

Even where affairs came not to such extremities (which they failed not to do almost in every city twice or thrice every century), property was rendered very precarious by the maxims of ancient government. Xenophon, in the banquet of Socrates, gives us a very natural, unaffected description of the tyranny of the Athenian people. “In my poverty,” says Charmides, “I am much more happy than ever I was while possessed of riches; as much as it is happier to be in security than in terrors, free than a slave, to receive than to pay court, to be trusted than suspected. Formerly I was obliged to caress every informer, some imposition was continually laid upon me, and it was never allowed me to travel or be absent from the city. At present, when I am poor, I look big and threaten others. The rich are afraid of me, and show me every kind of civility and respect, and I am become a kind of tyrant in the city.”

In one of the pleadings of Lysias, the orator very coolly speaks of it, by the by, as a maxim of the Athenian people, that whenever they wanted money they put to death some of the rich citizens as well as strangers, for the sake of the forfeiture. In mentioning this, he seems to have no intention of blaming them, still less of provoking them who were his audience and judges.

Whether a man was a citizen or a stranger among that people, it seems indeed requisite either that he should impoverish himself or the people would impoverish him, and perhaps kill him into the bargain. The orator last mentioned gives a pleasant account of an estate laid out in the public service^[66]—that is, above the third of it in raree-shows and figured dances.

^{p135}

I need not insist on the Greek tyrannies, which were altogether horrible. Even the mixed monarchies, by which most of the ancient states of Greece were governed before the introduction of republics, were very unsettled.

Scarce any city but Athens, says Isocrates, could show a succession of kings for four or five generations.

Besides many other obvious reasons for the instability of ancient monarchies, the equal division of property among the brothers in private families must, by a necessary consequence, contribute to unsettle and disturb the state. The universal preference given to the elder by modern laws, though it increases the inequality of fortunes, has, however, this good effect, that it accustoms men to the same idea of public succession, and cuts off all claim and pretension of the younger.

The new settled colony of Heraclea, falling immediately into factions, applied to Sparta, who sent Heripidas with full authority to quiet their dissensions. This man, not provoked by any opposition, not inflamed by party rage, knew no better expedient than immediately putting to death about 500 of the citizens. A strong proof how deeply rooted these violent maxims of government were throughout all Greece. {p136}

If such was the disposition of men's minds among that refined people, what may be expected in the commonwealths of Italy, Africa, Spain, and Gaul, which were denominated barbarous? Why otherwise did the Greeks so much value themselves on their humanity, gentleness, and moderation above all other nations? This reasoning seems very natural; but unluckily the history of the Roman commonwealth in its earlier times, if we give credit to the received accounts, stands against us. No blood was ever shed in any sedition at Rome till the murder of the Gracchi. Dionysius Halicarnassæus, observing the singular humanity of the Roman people in this particular, makes use of it as an argument that they were originally of Grecian extraction; whence we may conclude that the factions and revolutions in the barbarous republics were usually more violent than even those of Greece above mentioned.

If the Romans were so late in coming to blows, they made ample compensation after they had once entered upon the bloody scene; and Appian's history of their civil wars contains the most frightful picture of massacres, proscriptions, and forfeitures that ever was presented to the world. What pleases most in that historian is that he seems to feel a proper resentment of these barbarous proceedings, and talks not with that provoking coolness and indifference which custom had produced in many of the Greek historians.[67] {p137}

The maxims of ancient politics contain, in general, so little humanity and moderation that it seems superfluous to give any particular reason for the violences committed at any particular period; yet I cannot forbear observing that the laws in the latter ages of the Roman commonwealth were so absurdly contrived that they obliged the heads of parties to have recourse to these extremities. All capital punishments were abolished. However criminal, or, what is more, however dangerous any citizen might be, he could not regularly be punished otherwise than by banishment; and it became necessary in the revolutions of party to draw the sword of private vengeance; nor was it easy, when laws were once violated, to set bounds to these sanguinary proceedings. Had Brutus himself prevailed over the Triumvirate, could he, in common prudence, have allowed Octavius and Anthony to live, and have contented himself with banishing them to Rhodes or Marseilles, where they might still have plotted new commotions and rebellions? His executing C. Antonius, brother to the Triumvir, shows evidently his sense of the matter. Did not Cicero, with the approbation of all the wise and virtuous of Rome, arbitrarily put to death Catiline's associates contrary to law and without any trial or form of process? And if he moderated his executions, did it not proceed either from the clemency of his temper or the conjunctures of the times? A wretched security in a government which pretends to laws and liberty!

Thus, one extreme produces another. In the same manner as excessive severity in the laws is apt to beget great relaxation in their execution, so their excessive lenity naturally produces cruelty and barbarity. It is dangerous to force us, in any case, to pass their sacred boundaries. {p138}

One general cause of the disorders so frequent in all ancient governments seems to have consisted in the great difficulty of establishing any aristocracy in those ages, and the perpetual discontents and seditions of the people whenever even the meanest and most beggarly were excluded from the legislature and from public offices. The very quality of freeman gave such a rank, being opposed to that of slave, that it seemed to entitle the possessor to every power and privilege of the commonwealth. Solon's laws excluded no freeman from votes or elections, but confined some magistracies to a particular census; yet were the people never satisfied till those laws were repealed. By the treaty with Antipater, no Athenian had a vote whose census was less than 2000 drachmas (about £60 sterling). And though such a government would to us appear sufficiently democratical, it

was so disagreeable to that people that above two-thirds of them immediately left their country. Cassander reduced that census to the half, yet still the government was considered as an oligarchical tyranny and the effect of foreign violence.

Servius Tullius's laws seem very equal and reasonable, by fixing the power in proportion to the property, yet the Roman people could never be brought quietly to submit to them.

In those days there was no medium between a severe, jealous aristocracy, ruling over discontented subjects, and a turbulent, factious, tyrannical democracy.

But, thirdly, there are many other circumstances in which ancient nations seem inferior to the modern, both for the happiness and increase of mankind. Trade, manufactures, industry were nowhere in former ages so flourishing as they are at present in Europe. The only garb of the ancients, both for males and females, seems to have been a kind of flannel which they wore commonly white or gray, and which they scoured as often as it grew dirty. Tyre, which carried on, after Carthage, the greatest commerce of any city in the Mediterranean before it was destroyed by Alexander, was no mighty city, if we credit ^{p139} Arrian's account of its inhabitants.[68] Athens is commonly supposed to have been a trading city; but it was as populous before the Median War as at any time after it, according to Herodotus,[69] and yet its commerce at that time was so inconsiderable that, as the same historian observes, even the neighbouring coasts of Asia were as little frequented by the Greeks as the Pillars of Hercules—for beyond these he conceived nothing.

Great interest of money and great profits of trade are an infallible indication that industry and commerce are but in their infancy. We read in Lysias of 100 per cent. profit made of a cargo of two talents, sent to no greater distance than from Athens to the Adriatic. Nor is this mentioned as an instance of exorbitant profit. Antidorus, says Demosthenes, paid three talents and a half for a house which he let at a talent a year; and the orator blames his own tutors for not employing his money to like advantage. "My fortune," says he, "in eleven years minority ought to have been tripled." The value of twenty of the slaves left by his father he computes at 40 minas, and the yearly profit of their labour at 12. The most moderate interest at Athens (for there was higher often paid) was 12 per cent., and that paid monthly. Not to insist upon the exorbitant interest of 34 per cent. to which

the vast sums distributed in elections had raised money at Rome, we find that Verres, before that factious period, stated 24 per cent. for money, which he left in the publicans' hands. And though Cicero declaims against this article, it is not on account of the extravagant usury, but because it had never been customary to state any interest on such occasions. Interest, indeed, sunk at Rome after the settlement of the empire; {p140} but it never remained any considerable time so low as in the commercial states of modern ages.

Among the other inconveniences which the Athenians felt from the fortifying Decelia by the Lacedemonians, it is represented by Thucydides as one of the most considerable that they could not bring over their corn from Eubea by land, passing by Oropus; but were obliged to embark it and to sail about the promontory of Sunium—a surprising instance of the imperfection of ancient navigation, for the water-carriage is not here above double the land.

I do not remember any passage in any ancient author where the growth of any city is ascribed to the establishment of a manufacture. The commerce which is said to flourish is chiefly the exchange of those commodities for which different soils and climates were suited. The sale of wine and oil into Africa, according to Diodorus Siculus, was the foundation of the riches of Agrigentum. The situation of the city of Sybaris, according to the same author, was the cause of its immense populousness, being built near the two rivers, Crathys and Sybaris. But these two rivers, we may observe, are not navigable, and could only produce some fertile valleys for agriculture and husbandry—an advantage so inconsiderable that a modern writer would scarcely have taken notice of it.

The barbarity of the ancient tyrants, together with the extreme love of liberty which animated those ages, must have banished every merchant and manufacturer, and have quite depopulated the state, had it subsisted upon industry and commerce. While the cruel and suspicious Dionysius was carrying on his butcheries, who that was not detained by his landed property, and could have carried with him any art or skill to procure a subsistence in other countries, would have remained exposed to such implacable barbarity? The persecutions of Philip II. and Louis XIV. filled all Europe with the manufacturers of Flanders and of France.

I grant that agriculture is the species of industry which is chiefly requisite to the subsistence of multitudes, and it is possible that this industry

may flourish even where {p141} manufactures and other arts are unknown and neglected. Switzerland is at present a very remarkable instance, where we find at once the most skilful husbandmen and the most bungling tradesmen that are to be met with in all Europe. That agriculture flourished in Greece and Italy, at least in some parts of them, and at some periods, we have reason to presume; and whether the mechanical arts had reached the same degree of perfection may not be esteemed so material, especially if we consider the great equality in the ancient republics, where each family was obliged to cultivate with the greatest care and industry its own little field in order to its subsistence.

But is it just reasoning, because agriculture may in some instances flourish without trade or manufactures, to conclude that, in any great extent of country and for any great tract of time, it would subsist alone? The most natural way surely of encouraging husbandry is first to excite other kinds of industry, and thereby afford the labourer a ready market for his commodities and a return of such goods as may contribute to his pleasure and enjoyment. This method is infallible and universal, and as it prevails more in modern government than in the ancient, it affords a presumption of the superior populousness of the former.

Every man, says Xenophon, may be a farmer; no art or skill is requisite: all consists in the industry and attention to the execution. A strong proof, as Columella hints, that agriculture was but little known in the age of Xenophon.

All our later improvements and refinements, have they operated nothing towards the easy subsistence of men, and consequently towards their propagation and increase? Our superior skill in mechanics, the discovery of new worlds, by which commerce has been so much enlarged, the establishment of posts, and the use of bills of exchange: these seem all extremely useful to the encouragement of art, industry, and populousness. Were we to strike off these, what a check should we give to every kind of business and labour, and what multitudes of families would immediately perish from want and hunger! And it seems not probable {p142} that we could supply the place of these new inventions by any other regulation or institution.

Have we reason to think that the police of ancient states was any wise comparable to that of modern, or that men had then equal security either at

home or in their journeys by land or water? I question not but every impartial examiner would give us the preference in this particular.

Thus, upon comparing the whole, it seems impossible to assign any just reason why the world should have been more populous in ancient than in modern times. The equality of property among the ancients, liberty, and the small divisions of their states, were indeed favourable to the propagation of mankind; but their wars were more bloody and destructive, their governments more factious and unsettled, commerce and manufactures more feeble and languishing, and the general police more loose and irregular. These latter disadvantages seem to form a sufficient counterbalance to the former advantages, and rather favour the opposite opinion to that which commonly prevails with regard to this subject.

But there is no reasoning, it may be said, against matter of fact. If it appear that the world was then more populous than at present, we may be assured that our conjectures are false, and that we have overlooked some material circumstance in the comparison. This I readily own: all our preceding reasonings I acknowledge to be mere trifling, or, at least, small skirmishes and frivolous rencounters which decide nothing. But unluckily the main combat, where we compare facts, cannot be rendered much more decisive. The facts delivered by ancient authors are either so uncertain or so imperfect as to afford us nothing positive in this matter. How indeed could it be otherwise? The very facts which we must oppose to them in computing the greatness of modern states are far from being either certain or complete. Many grounds of calculation proceeded on by celebrated writers are little better than those of the Emperor Heliogabalus, who formed an estimate of the immense greatness of Rome from ten thousand pound weight of cobwebs which had been found in that city. {p143}

It is to be remarked that all kinds of numbers are uncertain in ancient manuscripts, and have been subject to much greater corruptions than any other part of the text, and that for a very obvious reason. Any alteration in other places commonly affects the sense or grammar, and is more readily perceived by the reader and transcriber.

Few enumerations of inhabitants have been made of any tract of country by any ancient author of good authority so as to afford us a large enough view for comparison.

It is probable that there was formerly a good foundation for the number of citizens assigned to any free city, because they entered for a share of the

government, and there were exact registers kept of them. But as the number of slaves is seldom mentioned, this leaves us in as great uncertainty as ever with regard to the populousness even of single cities.

The first page of Thucydides is, in my opinion, the commencement of real history. All preceding narrations are so intermixed with fable that philosophers ought to abandon them, in a great measure, to the embellishment of poets and orators.[70]

With regard to remote times, the numbers of people assigned are often ridiculous, and lose all credit and authority. The free citizens of Sybaris, able to bear arms and actually drawn out in battle, were 300,000. They encountered at Siagra with 100,000 citizens of Crotona, another Greek city contiguous to them, and were defeated. This is Diodorus Siculus's account, and is very seriously {p144} insisted on by that historian. Strabo also mentions the same number of Sybarites.

Diodorus Siculus, enumerating the inhabitants of Agrigentum, when it was destroyed by the Carthaginians, says that they amounted to 20,000 citizens, 200,000 strangers, besides slaves, who, in so opulent a city as he represents it, would probably be at least as numerous. We must remark that the women and the children are not included, and that therefore, upon the whole, the city must have contained near two millions of inhabitants.[71] And what was the reason of so immense an increase! They were very industrious in cultivating the neighbouring fields, not exceeding a small English county; and they traded with their wine and oil to Africa, which, at that time, had none of these commodities.

Ptolemy, says Theocritus, commanded 33,339 cities. I suppose the singularity of the number was the reason of assigning it. Diodorus Siculus assigns three millions of inhabitants to Egypt, a very small number; but then he makes the number of their cities amount to 18,000—an evident contradiction.

He says the people were formerly seven millions. Thus remote times are always most envied and admired.

That Xerxes's army was extremely numerous I can readily believe, both from the great extent of his empire and from the foolish practice of the Eastern nations of encumbering their camp with a superfluous multitude; but will any rational man cite Herodotus's wonderful narrations as an authority? There is something very rational, I own, in Lysias's argument upon this subject. Had not Xerxes' army been incredibly numerous, says he,

he had never built a bridge over the Hellespont: it had been much easier to have transported his men over so short a passage, with the numerous shipping of which he was master.

Polybius says that the Romans, between the first and second Punic Wars, being threatened with an invasion from {p145} the Gauls, mustered all their own forces and those of their allies, and found them amount to seven hundred thousand men able to bear arms. A great number surely, and which, when joined to the slaves, is probably not less, if not rather more than that extent of country affords at present.[72] The enumeration too seems to have been made with some exactness, and Polybius gives us the detail of the particulars; but might not the number be imagined in order to encourage the people?

Diodorus Siculus makes the same enumeration amount to near a million. These variations are suspicious. He plainly, too, supposes that Italy in his time was not so populous, another very suspicious circumstance; for who can believe that the inhabitants of that country diminished from the time of the first Punic War to that of the Triumvirates?

Julius Cæsar, according to Appian, encountered four millions of Gauls, killed one million, and took another million prisoners.[73] Supposing the number of the enemy's army and of the killed could be exactly assigned, which never is possible, how could it be known how often the same man returned into the armies, or how distinguish the new from the old levied soldiers? No attention ought ever to be given to such loose, exaggerated calculations; especially where the author tells us not the mediums upon which the calculations were founded.

Paterculus makes the number killed by Cæsar amount only to 400,000: a much more probable account, and more easily reconciled to the history of these wars given by that conqueror himself in his *Commentaries*.

One would imagine that every circumstance of the life and actions of Dionysius the elder might be regarded as authentic and free from all fabulous exaggeration, both {p146} because he lived at a time when letters flourished most in Greece and because his chief historian was Philistus, a man allowed to be of great genius, and who was a courtier and minister of that prince. But can we admit that he had a standing army of 100,000 foot, 10,000 horse, and a fleet of 400 galleys? These, we may observe, were mercenary forces, and subsisted upon their pay, like our armies in Europe. For the citizens were all disarmed; and when Dion afterwards invaded

Sicily and called on his countrymen to vindicate their liberty, he was obliged to bring arms along with him, which he distributed among those who joined him. In a state where agriculture alone flourishes there may be many inhabitants, and if these be all armed and disciplined, a great force may be called out upon occasion; but great numbers of mercenary troops can never be maintained without either trade and manufactures, or very extensive dominions. The United Provinces never were masters of such a force by sea and land as that which is said to belong to Dionysius; yet they possess as large a territory, perfectly well cultivated, and have infinitely more resources from their commerce and industry. Diodorus Siculus allows that, even in his time, the army of Dionysius appeared incredible; that is, as I interpret it, it was entirely a fiction, and the opinion arose from the exaggerated flattery of the courtiers, and perhaps from the vanity and policy of the tyrant himself.

It is a very usual fallacy to consider all the ages of antiquity as one period, and to compute the numbers contained in the great cities mentioned by ancient authors as if these cities had been all contemporary. The Greek colonies flourished extremely in Sicily during the age of Alexander; but in Augustus's time they were so decayed that almost all the product of that fertile island was consumed in Italy.

Let us now examine the numbers of inhabitants assigned to particular cities in antiquity, and omitting the numbers of Nineveh, Babylon, and the Egyptian Thebes, let us confine ourselves to the sphere of real history, to the {p147} Grecian and Roman states. I must own, the more I consider this subject the more am I inclined to scepticism with regard to the great populousness ascribed to ancient times.

Athens is said by Plato to be a very great city; and it was surely the greatest of all the Greek[74] cities, except Syracuse, which was nearly about the same size in Thucydides' time, and afterwards increased beyond it; for Cicero[75] mentions it as the greatest of all the Greek cities in his time, not comprehending, I suppose, either Antioch or Alexandria under that denomination. Athenæus says that, by the enumeration of Demetrius Phalereus, there were in Athens 21,000 citizens, 10,000 strangers, and 400,000 slaves. This number is very much insisted on by those whose opinion I call in question, and is esteemed a fundamental fact to their purpose; but, in my opinion, there is no point of criticism more certain than that Athenæus and Ctesicles, whom he cites, are here mistaken, and that the number of slaves is augmented by a whole cypher, and ought not to be regarded as more than 40,000.

Firstly, when the number of citizens is said to be 21,000 by Athenæus, [76] men of full age are only understood. For (1) Herodotus says that Aristagoras, ambassador from the Ionians, found it harder to deceive one Spartan than 30,000 Athenians, meaning in a loose way the whole state, supposed to be met in one popular assembly, excluding the women and children. (2) Thucydides says that, making allowance for all the absentees in the fleet, army, garrisons, and for people employed in their private affairs, the Athenian Assembly never rose to five thousand. (3) The forces enumerated by the same historian,[77] being all citizens, and amounting to 13,000 heavy-armed infantry, prove the {p148} same method of calculation, as also the whole tenor of the Greek historians, who always understand men of full age when they assign the number of citizens in any republic. Now, these being but the fourth of the inhabitants, the free Athenians were by this account 84,000, the strangers 40,000, and the slaves, calculating by the smaller number, and allowing that they married and propagated at the same rate with freemen, were 160,000, and the whole inhabitants 284,000—a large enough number surely. The other number, 1,720,000, makes Athens larger than London and Paris united.

Secondly, there were but 10,000 houses in Athens.

Thirdly, though the extent of the walls, as given us by Thucydides, be great (viz., eighteen miles, beside the sea-coast), yet Xenophon says there

was much waste ground within the walls. They seemed indeed to have joined four distinct and separate cities.[78]

Fourthly, no insurrection of the slaves, nor suspicion of insurrection, are ever mentioned by historians, except one commotion of the miners.

Fifthly, the Athenians' treatment of their slaves is said by Xenophon, and Demosthenes, and Plautus to have been extremely gentle and indulgent, which could never have been the case had the disproportion been twenty to one. The disproportion is not so great in any of our colonies, and yet we are obliged to exercise a very rigorous military government over the negroes.

Sixthly, no man is ever esteemed rich for possessing what may be reckoned an equal distribution of property {p149} in any country, or even triple or quadruple that wealth. Thus, every person in England is computed by some to spend sixpence a day; yet is he estimated but poor who has five times that sum. Now, Timarchus is said by Æschines to have been left in easy circumstances, but he was master only of ten slaves employed in manufactures. Lysias and his brother, two strangers, were proscribed by the Thirty for their great riches, though they had but sixty apiece. Demosthenes was left very rich by his father, yet he had no more than fifty-two slaves. His workhouse, of twenty cabinet-makers, is said to have been a very considerable manufactory.

Seventhly, during the Decelian War, as the Greek historians call it, 20,000 slaves deserted and brought the Athenians to great distress, as we learn from Thucydides. This could not have happened had they been only the twentieth part. The best slaves would not desert.

Eighthly, Xenophon proposes a scheme for entertaining by the public 10,000 slaves. "And that so great a number may possibly be supported any one will be convinced," says he, "who considers the numbers we possessed before the Decelian War"—a way of speaking altogether incompatible with the larger number of Athenæus.

Ninthly, the whole census of the state of Athens was less than 6000 talents; and though numbers in ancient manuscripts be often suspected by critics, yet this is unexceptionable, both because Demosthenes, who gives it, gives also the detail, which checks him, and because Polybius assigns the same number and reasons upon it. Now, the most vulgar slave could yield by his labour an obolus a day, over and above his maintenance, as we learn from Xenophon, who says that Nicias's overseer paid his master so much for slaves, whom he employed in digging of mines. If you will take the

pains to estimate an obolus a day and the slaves at 400,000, computing only at four years' purchase, you will find the sum above 12,000 talents, even though allowance be made for the great number of holidays in Athens. Besides, many of the slaves would have a much {p150} greater value from their art. The lowest that Demosthenes estimates any of his father's slaves is two minas a head; and upon this supposition it is a little difficult, I confess, to reconcile even the number of 40,000 slaves with the census of 6000 talents.

Tenthly, Chios is said by Thucydides to contain more slaves than any Greek city except Sparta. Sparta then had more than Athens, in proportion to the number of citizens. The Spartans were 9000 in the town, 30,000 in the country. The male slaves, therefore, of full age, must have been more than 780,000; the whole more than 3,120,000—a number impossible to be maintained in a narrow barren country such as Laconia, which had no trade. Had the Helotes been so very numerous, the murder of 2000 mentioned by Thucydides would have irritated them without weakening them.

Besides, we are to consider that the number assigned by Athenæus,[79] whatever it is, comprehends all the inhabitants of Attica as well as those of Athens. The Athenians affected much a country life, as we learn from Thucydides, and when they were all chased into town by the invasion of their territory during the Peloponnesian War, the city was not able to contain them, and they were obliged to lie in the porticoes, temples, and even streets, for want of lodging.

The same remark is to be extended to all the other Greek cities, and when the number of the citizens is assigned we must always understand it of the inhabitants of the neighbouring country as well as of the city. Yet, even with this allowance, it must be confessed that Greece was a populous country and exceeded what we could imagine of so narrow a territory, naturally not very fertile, and which drew no supplies of corn from other places; {p151} for, excepting Athens, which traded to Pontus for that commodity, the other cities seem to have subsisted chiefly from their neighbouring territory.[80]

Rhodes is well known to have been a city of extensive commerce and of great fame and splendour, yet it contained only 6000 citizens able to bear arms when it was besieged by Demetrius.

Thebes was always one of the capital cities of Greece, but the number of its citizens exceeded not those of Rhodes.[81] Phliasia is said to be a

small city by Xenophon, {p152} yet we find that it contained 6000 citizens. I pretend not to reconcile these two facts. Perhaps Xenophon calls Phliasia a small town because it made but a small figure in Greece and maintained only a subordinate alliance with Sparta; or perhaps the country belonging to it was extensive, and most of the citizens were employed in the cultivation of it and dwelt in the neighbouring villages.

Mantineia was equal to any city in Arcadia, consequently it was equal to Megalopolis, which was fifty stadia, or sixty miles and a quarter in circumference. But Mantineia had only 3000 citizens. The Greek cities, therefore, contained often fields and gardens, together with the houses, and we cannot judge of them by the extent of their walls. Athens contained no more than 10,000 houses, yet its walls, with the sea-coast, were about twenty miles in extent. Syracuse was twenty-two miles in circumference, yet was scarcely ever spoken of by the ancients as more populous than Athens. Babylon was a square of fifteen miles, or sixty miles in circuit; but it contained large cultivated fields and enclosures, as we learn from Pliny. Though Aurelian's wall was fifty miles in circumference, the circuit of all the thirteen divisions of Rome, taken apart, according to Publius Victor, was only about forty-three miles. When an enemy invaded the country all the inhabitants retired within the walls of the ancient cities, with their cattle and furniture and instruments of husbandry, and the great height to which the walls were raised enabled a small number to defend them with facility.

"Sparta," says Xenophon, [82] "is one of the cities of Greece that has the fewest inhabitants." Yet Polybius says that it was forty-eight stadia in circumference, and was round.

All the Ætolians able to bear arms in Antipater's time, deducting some few garrisons, were but ten thousand men.

Polybius tells us that the Achæan league might, without any inconvenience, march thirty or forty thousand men; and this account seems very probable, for that league {p153} comprehended the greatest part of Peloponnesus. Yet Pausanias, speaking of the same period, says that all the Achæans able to bear arms, even when several manumitted slaves were joined to them, did not amount to fifteen thousand.

The Thessalians, till their final conquest by the Romans, were in all ages turbulent, factious, seditious, disorderly. It is not, therefore, natural to suppose that that part of Greece abounded much in people.

We are told by Thucydides that the part of Peloponnesus adjoining to Pylos was desert and uncultivated. Herodotus says that Macedonia was full of lions and wild bulls, animals which can only inhabit vast unpeopled forests. These were the two extremities of Greece.

All the inhabitants of Epirus, of all ages, sexes, and conditions, who were sold by Paulus Æmilius, amounted only to 150,000. Yet Epirus might be double the extent of Yorkshire.

Justin tells us that when Philip of Macedon was declared head of the Greek confederacy he called a congress of all the states, except the Lacedemonians, who refused to concur; and he found the force of the whole, upon computation, to amount to 200,000 infantry and 15,000 cavalry. This must be understood to be all the citizens capable of bearing arms, for as the Greek republics maintained no mercenary forces, and had no militia distinct from the whole body of the citizens, it is not conceivable what other medium there could be of computation. That such an army could ever by Greece be brought into the field, and could be maintained there, is contrary to all history. Upon this supposition, therefore, we may thus reason. The free Greeks of all ages and sexes were 860,000. The slaves, estimating them by the number of Athenian slaves as above, who seldom married or had families, were double the male citizens of full age—viz., 430,000. And all the inhabitants of ancient Greece, excepting Laconia, were about 1,290,000—no mighty number, nor exceeding what may be found at present in Scotland, a country of nearly the same extent, and very indifferently peopled. {p154}

We may now consider the numbers of people in Rome and Italy, and collect all the lights afforded us by scattered passages in ancient authors. We shall find, upon the whole, a great difficulty in fixing any opinion on that head, and no reason to support those exaggerated calculations so much insisted on by modern writers.

Dionysius Halicarnassæus says that the ancient walls of Rome were nearly of the same compass with those of Athens, but that the suburbs ran out to a great extent, and it was difficult to tell where the town ended or the country began. In some places of Rome, it appears from the same author, from Juvenal, and from other ancient writers,^[83] that the houses were high, and families lived in separate storeys, one above another; but it is probable that these were only the poorer citizens, and only in some few streets. If we may judge from the younger Pliny's^[84] account of his house, and from

Bartoli's plans of ancient buildings, the men of quality had very spacious palaces; and their buildings were like the Chinese houses at this day, where each apartment {p155} is separated from the rest, and rises no higher than a single storey. To which, if we add that the Roman nobility much affected porticoes, and even woods, in town, we may perhaps allow Vossius (though there is no manner of reason for it) to read the famous passage of the elder Pliny[85] his own way, {p156} without admitting the extravagant consequences which he draws from it.

The number of citizens who received corn by the public {p157} distribution in Augustus's time was 200,000. This one would esteem a pretty certain ground of calculation, yet it is attended with such circumstances as throw us back into doubt and uncertainty.

Did the poorer citizens only receive the distribution? It was calculated, to be sure, chiefly for their benefit; but it appears from a passage in Cicero that the rich might also take their portion, and that it was esteemed no reproach in them to apply for it.

To whom was the corn given—whether only to heads of families, or to every man, woman, and child? The portion every month was five modii to each (about five-sixths of a bushel). This was too little for a family, and too much for an individual. A very accurate antiquarian therefore infers that it was given to every man of full years, but he allows the matter to be uncertain.

Was it strictly inquired whether the claimant lived within the precincts of Rome, or was it sufficient that he presented himself at the monthly distribution? This last seems more probable.[86]

Were there no false claimants? We are told that Cæsar struck off at once 170,000, who had crept in without a just title; and it is very little probable that he remedied all abuses.

But, lastly, what proportion of slaves must we assign to these citizens? This is the most material question, and the most uncertain. It is very doubtful whether Athens can be established as a rule for Rome. Perhaps the Athenians had more slaves, because they employed them in manufactures, for which a capital city like Rome seems not so proper. Perhaps, on the other hand, the Romans had more slaves, on account of their superior luxury and riches. {p158}

There were exact bills of mortality kept at Rome; but no ancient author has given us the number of burials, except Suetonius, who tells us that in

one season there were 30,000 dead carried into the temple of Libetina; but this was during a plague, which can afford no certain foundation for any inference.

The public corn, though distributed only to 200,000 citizens, affected very considerably the whole agriculture of Italy, a fact no way reconcilable to some modern exaggerations with regard to the inhabitants of that country.

The best ground of conjecture I can find concerning the greatness of ancient Rome is this: We are told by Herodian that Antioch and Alexandria were very little inferior to Rome. It appears from Diodorus Siculus that one straight street of Alexandria, reaching from port to port, was five miles long; and as Alexandria was much more extended in length than breadth, it seems to have been a city nearly of the bulk of Paris,[87] and Rome might be about the size of London. {p159}

There lived in Alexandria, in Diodorus Siculus's time, 300,000 free people, comprehending, I suppose, women and children.[88] But what number of slaves? Had we any just ground to fix these at an equal number with the free inhabitants, it would favour the foregoing calculation.

There is a passage in Herodian which is a little surprising. He says positively that the palace of the emperor was as large as all the rest of the city. This was Nero's golden house, which is indeed represented by Suetonius and Pliny[89] as of an enormous extent, but no power of imagination can make us conceive it to bear any proportion to such a city as London.

We may observe that, had the historian been relating Nero's extravagance, and had he made use of such an expression, it would have had much less weight, these rhetorical exaggerations being so apt to creep into an author's style even when the most chaste and correct; but it is mentioned by Herodian only by the by, in relating the quarrels between Geta and Caracalla. {p160}

It appears from the same historian that there was then much land uncultivated and put to no manner of use, and he ascribes it as a great praise to Pertinax that he allowed every one to take such land either in Italy or elsewhere and cultivate it as he pleased, without paying any taxes. Lands uncultivated and put to no manner of use! This is not heard of in any part of Christendom, except perhaps in some remote parts of Hungary, as I have

been informed. And it surely corresponds very ill with that idea of the extreme populousness of antiquity so much insisted on.

We learn from Vopiscus that there was in Etruria much fertile land uncultivated, which the Emperor Aurelian intended to convert into vineyards, in order to furnish the Roman people with a gratuitous distribution of wine: a very proper expedient to dispeople still further that capital and all the neighbouring territories.

It may not be amiss to take notice of the account which Polybius gives of the great herds of swine to be met with in Tuscany and Lombardy, as well as in Greece, and of the method of feeding them which was then practised. “There are great herds of swine,” says he, “throughout all Italy, particularly in former times, through Etruria and Cisalpine Gaul. And a herd frequently contains a thousand or more swine. When one of these herds in feeding meets with another they mix together, and the swineherds have no other expedient to separate them than to go to different quarters, where they sound their horn, and these animals, being accustomed to that signal, run immediately each to the horn of his own keeper. Whereas in Greece, if the herds of swine happen to mix in the forests, he who has the greatest flock takes cunningly the opportunity of driving all away. And thieves are very apt to purloin the straggling hogs which have wandered to a great distance from their keeper in search of food.”

May we not infer from this account that the North of Italy was then much less peopled and worse cultivated than at present? How could these vast herds be fed in a country so thick of enclosures, so improved by agriculture, so divided ^{p161} by farms, so planted with vines and corn intermingled together? I must confess that Polybius’s relation has more the air of that economy which is to be met with in our American colonies than the management of a European country.

We meet with a reflection in Aristotle’s^[90] *Ethics* which seems to me unaccountable on any supposition, and by proving too much in favour of our present reasoning, may be thought really to prove nothing. That philosopher, treating of friendship, and observing that that relation ought neither to be contracted to the very few nor extended over a great multitude, illustrates his opinion by the following argument. “In like manner,” says he, “as a city cannot subsist if it either have so few inhabitants as ten, or so many as a hundred thousand, so is there a mediocrity required in the number of friends, and you destroy the essence of friendship by running

into either extreme.” What! impossible that a city can contain a hundred thousand inhabitants! Had Aristotle never seen nor heard of a city which was near so populous? This, I must own, passes my comprehension.

Pliny tells us that Seleucia, the seat of the Greek empire in the East, was reported to contain 600,000 people. Carthage is said by Strabo to have contained 700,000. The inhabitants of Pekin are not much more numerous. London, Paris, and Constantinople may admit of nearly the same computation; at least, the two latter cities do not exceed it. Rome, Alexandria, Antioch we have already spoke of. From the experience of past and present ages one might conjecture that there is a kind of impossibility that any city could ever rise much beyond this proportion. Whether the grandeur of a city be founded on commerce or on empire, there seems to be invincible obstacles which prevent its further progress. The seats of vast monarchies, by introducing extravagant luxury, irregular expense, idleness, dependence, and false ideas of rank and superiority, are {p162} improper for commerce. Extensive commerce checks itself by raising the price of all labour and commodities. When a great court engages the attendance of a numerous nobility possessed of overgrown fortunes, the middling gentry remain in their provincial towns, where they can make a figure on a moderate income. And if the dominions of a state arrive at an enormous size, there necessarily arise many capitals in the remoter provinces, whither all the inhabitants except a few courtiers repair for education, fortune, and amusement.[91] London, by uniting extensive commerce and middling empire, has perhaps arrived at a greatness which no city will ever be able to exceed.

Choose Dover or Calais for a centre: draw a circle of two hundred miles radius; you comprehend London, Paris, the Netherlands, the United Provinces, and some of the best cultivated counties of France and England. It may safely, I think, be affirmed that no spot of ground can be found in antiquity, of equal extent, which contained near so many great and populous cities, and was so stocked with riches and inhabitants. To balance, in both periods, the states which possessed most art, knowledge, civility, and the best police seems the truest method of comparison.

It is an observation of L’Abbé du Bos that Italy is warmer at present than it was in ancient times. “The annals of Rome tell us,” says he, “that in the year 480 A.U.C. the winter was so severe that it destroyed the trees. The Tiber froze in Rome, and the ground was covered with snow for forty days.

When Juvenal describes a superstitious woman, he represents her as breaking the ice of the Tiber that she might perform her ablutions.

“‘Hybernum fracta glacie descendet in amnem,
Ter matutino Tyberi mergetur.’

“He speaks of that river’s freezing as a common event. Many passages of Horace suppose the streets of Rome full of snow and ice. We should have more certainty with regard to this point had the ancients known the use of thermometers; but their writers, without intending it, give us information sufficient to convince us that the winters are now much more temperate at Rome than formerly. At present the Tiber no more freezes at Rome than the Nile at Cairo. The Romans esteem the winter very rigorous if the snow lies two days, and if one sees for eight-and-forty hours a few icicles hang from a fountain that has a north exposition.”

The observation of this ingenious critic may be extended to other European climates. Who could discover the mild climate of France in Diodorus Siculus’s description of that of Gaul? “As it is a northern climate,” says he, “it is infested with cold to an extreme degree. In cloudy weather, instead of rain, there fall great snows, and in clear weather it there freezes so excessive hard that the rivers acquire bridges of their own substance, over which not only single travellers may pass, but large armies, accompanied with all their baggage and loaded waggons. And there being many rivers in Gaul—the Rhone, the Rhine, etc.—almost all of them are frozen over, and it is usual, in order to prevent falling, to cover the ice with chaff and straw at the places where the road passes.” “Colder than a Gallic winter” is used by Petronius as a proverbial expression.

“North of the Cevennes,” says Strabo, “Gaul produces not figs and olives, and the vines which have been planted bear not grapes that will ripen.”

Ovid positively maintains, with all the serious affirmation of prose, that the Euxine Sea was frozen over every winter in his time, and he appeals to Roman governors, whom he names, for the truth of his assertion. This seldom or never happens at present in the latitude of Tomi, whither Ovid was banished. All the complaints of the same poet seem to mark a rigour of the seasons which is scarce experienced at present in Petersburg or Stockholm.

Tournefort, a Provençal, who had travelled into the same {p164} countries, observes that there is not a finer climate in the world; and he asserts that nothing but Ovid's melancholy could have given him such dismal ideas of it.

But the facts mentioned by that poet are too circumstantial to bear any such interpretation.

Polybius says that the climate in Arcadia was very cold, and the air moist.

"Italy," says Varro, "is the most temperate climate in Europe. The inland parts" (Gaul, Germany, and Pannonia, no doubt) "have almost perpetual winter."

The northern parts of Spain, according to Strabo, are but ill inhabited because of the great cold.

Allowing, therefore, this remark to be just, that Europe is become warmer than formerly, how can we account for it? Plainly by no other method than by supposing that the land is at present much better cultivated, and that the woods are cleared which formerly threw a shade upon the earth and kept the rays of the sun from penetrating to it. Our northern colonies in America become more temperate in proportion as the woods are felled,[92] but in general, every one may remark that cold still makes itself more severely felt both in North and South America, than in places under the same latitude in Europe.

Saserna, quoted by Columella, affirmed that the disposition of the heavens was altered before his time, and that the air had become much milder and warmer. "As appears hence," says he, "that many places now abound with vineyards and olive plantations which formerly, by reason of the rigour of the climate, could raise none of these productions." Such a change, if real, will be allowed an evident sign of the better cultivation and peopling of countries before the age of Saserna;[93] and if it be continued to the present times, is a {p165} proof that these advantages have been continually increasing throughout this part of the world.

Let us now cast our eye over all the countries which were the scene of ancient and modern history, and compare their past and present situation. We shall not, perhaps, find such foundation for the complaint of the present emptiness and depopulation of the world. Egypt is represented by Maillet, to whom we owe the best account of it, as extremely populous, though he esteems the number of its inhabitants to be diminished. Syria, and the

Lesser Asia, as well as the coast of Barbary, I can really own to be very desert in comparison of their ancient condition. The depopulation of Greece is also very obvious. But whether the country now called Turkey in Europe may not, in general, contain as many inhabitants as during the flourishing period of Greece may be a little doubtful. The Thracians seem then to have lived like the Tartars at present, by pillage and plunder; the Getes were still more uncivilized, and the Illyrians were no better. These occupy nine-tenths of that country, and though the government of the Turks be not very favourable to industry and propagation, yet it preserves at least peace and order among the inhabitants, and is preferable to that barbarous, unsettled condition in which they anciently lived.

Poland and Muscovy in Europe are not populous, but are certainly much more so than the ancient Sarmatia and Scythia, where no husbandry or tillage was ever heard of, and pasturage was the sole art by which the people were maintained. The like observation may be extended to Denmark and Sweden. No one ought to esteem the immense swarms of people which formerly came from the North, and overran all Europe, to be any objection to this opinion. Where a whole nation, or even half of it, remove their seat, it is easy to imagine what a prodigious multitude they must form, with what desperate valour they must make their attacks, and how the terror they strike into the invaded nations will make these magnify, in their imagination, both the courage and multitude of the invaders. Scotland is neither extensive nor populous, but were the half of its ^{p166} inhabitants to seek new seats they would form a colony as large as the Teutons and Cimbri, and would shake all Europe, supposing it in no better condition for defence than formerly.

Germany has surely at present twenty times more inhabitants than in ancient times, when they cultivated no ground, and each tribe valued itself on the extensive desolation which it spread around, as we learn from Cæsar, and Tacitus, and Strabo. A proof that the division into small republics will not alone render a nation populous, unless attended with the spirit of peace, order, and industry.

The barbarous condition of Britain in former times is well known, and the thinness of its inhabitants may easily be conjectured, both from their barbarity and from a circumstance mentioned by Herodian, that all Britain was marshy, even in Severus's time, after the Romans had been fully settled in it above a whole century.

It is not easily imagined that the Gauls were anciently much more advanced in the arts of life than their northern neighbours, since they travelled to this island for their education in the mysteries of the religion and philosophy of the Druids.[94] I cannot therefore think that Gaul was then near so populous as France is at present.

Were we to believe, indeed, and join together the testimony of Appian and that of Diodorus Siculus, we must admit an incredible populousness in Gaul. The former historian says that there were 400 nations in that country; the latter affirms that the largest of the Gallic nations consisted of 200,000 men, besides women and children, and the least of 50,000. Calculating therefore at a medium, we must admit of near 200,000,000 of people in a country which we esteem populous at present, though supposed to contain little more than twenty.[95] Such {p167} calculations therefore by their extravagance lose all manner of authority. We may observe that that equality of property, to which the populousness of antiquity may be ascribed, had no place among the Gauls. Their intestine wars also, before Cæsar's time, were almost perpetual. And Strabo observes that though all Gaul was cultivated, yet it was not cultivated with any skill or care, the genius of the inhabitants leading them less to arts than arms, till their slavery to Rome produced peace among themselves.

Cæsar enumerates very particularly the great forces which were levied at Belgium to oppose his conquests, and makes them amount to 208,000. These were not the whole people able to bear arms in Belgium; for the same historian tells us that the Bellovaci could have brought a hundred thousand men into the field, though they engaged only for sixty. Taking the whole, therefore, in this proportion of ten to six, the sum of fighting men in all the states of Belgium was about 350,000; all the inhabitants a million and a half. And Belgium being about the fourth of Gaul, that country might contain six millions, which is not the third of its present inhabitants.[96] We are informed by Cæsar that the Gauls had no fixed property in land; but that the chieftains, when any death happened in a family, made a new division of all the lands among the several members of the family. This is the custom of Tanistry, which so long prevailed in {p168} Ireland, and which retained that country in a state of misery, barbarism, and desolation.

The ancient Helvetia was 250 miles in length and 180 in breadth, according to the same author, yet contained only 360,000 inhabitants. The Canton of Berne alone has at present as many people.

After this computation of Appian and Diodorus Siculus, I know not whether I dare affirm that the modern Dutch are more numerous than the ancient Batavi.

Spain is decayed from what it was three centuries ago; but if we step backward two thousand years and consider the restless, turbulent, unsettled condition of its inhabitants, we may probably be inclined to think that it is now much more populous. Many Spaniards killed themselves when deprived of their arms by the Romans. It appears from Plutarch that robbery and plunder were esteemed honourable among the Spaniards. Hirtius represents in the same light the situation of that country in Cæsar's time, and he says that every man was obliged to live in castles and walled towns for his security. It was not till its final conquest under Augustus that these disorders were repressed. The account which Strabo and Justin give of Spain corresponds exactly with those above mentioned. How much therefore must it diminish from our idea of the populousness of antiquity when we find that Cicero, comparing Italy, Africa, Gaul, Greece, and Spain, mentions the great number of inhabitants as the peculiar circumstance which rendered this latter country formidable.^[97]

Italy, it is probable however, has decayed; but how many great cities does it still contain? Venice, Genoa, Pavia, Turin, Milan, Naples, Florence, Leghorn, which either ^{p169} subsisted not in ancient times, or were then very inconsiderable. If we reflect on this, we shall not be apt to carry matters to so great an extreme as is usual with regard to this subject.

When the Roman authors complain that Italy, which formerly exported corn, became dependent on all the provinces for its daily bread, they never ascribe this alteration to the increase of its inhabitants, but to the neglect of tillage and agriculture. A natural effect of that pernicious practice of importing corn in order to distribute it gratis among the Roman citizens, and a very bad means of multiplying the inhabitants of any country.^[98] The sportula, so much talked of by Martial and Juvenal, being presents regularly made by the great lords to their smaller clients, must have had a like tendency to produce idleness, debauchery, and a continual decay among the people. The parish-rates have at present the same bad consequences in England.

Were I to assign a period when I imagine this part of the world might possibly contain more inhabitants than at present, I should pitch upon the age of Trajan and the Antonines, the great extent of the Roman Empire

being then civilized and cultivated, settled almost in a profound peace both foreign and domestic, and living under the same regular police and government.^[99] But we are told that all ^{p170} extensive governments, especially absolute monarchies, are destructive to population, and contain a secret vice and poison, which destroy the effect of all these promising appearances. To confirm this, there is a passage cited from Plutarch, which being somewhat singular, we shall here examine it.

That author, endeavouring to account for the silence of many of the oracles, says that it may be ascribed to the present desolation of the world, proceeding from former wars and factions, which common calamity, he adds, has fallen heavier upon Greece than on any other country; insomuch that the whole could scarce at present furnish three thousand warriors, a number which, in the time of the Median War, were supplied by the single city of Megara. The gods, therefore, who affect works of dignity and importance, have suppressed many of their oracles, and deign not to use so many interpreters of their will to so diminutive a people. ^{p171}

I must confess that this passage contains so many difficulties that I know not what to make of it. You may observe that Plutarch assigns for a cause of the decay of mankind not the extensive dominion of the Romans, but the former wars and factions of the several nations, all which were quieted by the Roman arms. Plutarch's reasoning, therefore, is directly contrary to the inference which is drawn from the fact he advances.

Polybius supposes that Greece had become more prosperous and flourishing after the establishment of the Roman yoke;^[100] and though that historian wrote before these ^{p172} conquerors had degenerated from being the patrons to be the plunderers of mankind, yet as we find from Tacitus that the severity of the emperors afterwards checked the licence of the governors, we have no reason to think that extensive monarchy so destructive as it is so often represented.

We learn from Strabo that the Romans, from their regard to the Greeks, maintained, to his time, most of the privileges and liberties of that celebrated nation, and Nero afterwards rather increased them. How therefore can we imagine that the Roman yoke was so burdensome over that part of the world? The oppression of the proconsuls was restrained, and the magistracies in Greece being all bestowed in the several cities by the free votes of the people, there was no great necessity for the competitors to attend the emperor's court. If great numbers went to seek their fortunes in

Rome, and advance themselves by learning or eloquence, the commodities of their native country, many of them would return with the fortunes which they had acquired, and thereby enrich the Grecian commonwealths.

But Plutarch says that the general depopulation had been more sensibly felt in Greece than in any other country. How is this reconcilable to its superior privileges and advantages?

Besides, this passage by proving too much really proves nothing. Only three thousand men able to bear arms in all Greece! Who can admit so strange a proposition, especially if we consider the great number of Greek cities whose names still remain in history, and which are mentioned by writers long after the age of Plutarch? There are there surely ten times more people at present, when there scarce remains a city in all the bounds of ancient Greece. That country is still tolerably cultivated, and furnishes a sure supply of corn in case of any scarcity in Spain, Italy, or the South of France.

We may observe that the ancient frugality of the Greeks, and their equality of property, still subsisted during the age of Plutarch, as appears from Lucian. Nor is there any ^{p173} ground to imagine that that country was possessed by a few masters and a great number of slaves.

It is probable, indeed, that military discipline, being entirely useless, was extremely neglected in Greece after the establishment of the Roman Empire; and if these commonwealths, formerly so warlike and ambitious, maintained each of them a small city-guard to prevent mobbish disorders, it is all they had occasion for; and these, perhaps, did not amount to three thousand men throughout all Greece. I own that if Plutarch had this fact in his eye, he is here guilty of a very gross paralogism, and assigns causes nowise proportioned to the effects. But is it so great a prodigy that an author should fall into a mistake of this nature?^[101] ^{p174}

But whatever force may remain in this passage of Plutarch, we shall endeavour to counterbalance it by as remarkable a passage in Diodorus Siculus, where the historian, after mentioning Ninus's army of 1,700,000 foot and 200,000 horse, endeavours to support the credibility of this account by some posterior facts; and adds that we must not form a notion of the ancient populousness of mankind from the present emptiness and depopulation which is spread over the world. Thus an author, who lived at that very period of antiquity which is represented as most populous,^[102] complains of the desolation which then prevailed, gives the preference to

former times, and has recourse to ancient fables as a foundation for his opinion. The humour of blaming the present and admiring the past is strongly rooted in human nature, and has an influence even on persons endued with the most profound judgment and most extensive learning.

NOTES, OF THE POPULOUSNESS OF ANCIENT NATIONS.

39 An ingenious writer has honoured this discourse with an answer full of politeness, erudition, and good sense. So learned a refutation would have made the author suspect that his reasonings were entirely overthrown, had he not used the precaution from the beginning to keep himself on the sceptical side; and having taken this advantage of the ground, he was enabled, though with much inferior forces, to preserve himself from a total defeat. That reverend gentleman will always find, where his antagonist is so entrenched, that it will be difficult to enforce him. Varro, in such a situation, could defend himself against Hannibal, Pharnaces against Cæsar. The author, however, very willingly acknowledges that his antagonist has detected many mistakes both in his authorities and reasonings; and it was owing entirely to that gentleman's indulgence that many more errors were not remarked. In this edition advantage has been taken of his learned animadversions, and the essay has been rendered less imperfect than formerly.

40 Columella says (lib. 3, cap. 8) that in Egypt and Africa the bearing of twins was frequent and even customary; *gemini partus familiares, ac pæne solennes sunt*. If this was true, there is a physical difference both in countries and ages, for travellers make no such remarks of these countries at present; on the contrary, we are apt to suppose the northern nations more fertile. As those two countries were provinces of the Roman Empire, it is difficult, though not altogether absurd, to suppose that such a man as Columella might be mistaken with regard to them.

41 This too is a good reason why the smallpox does not depopulate countries so much as may at first sight be imagined. Where there is room for more people they will always arise, even without the assistance of naturalisation bills. It is remarked by Don Geronimo de Ustariz that the provinces of Spain which send most people to the Indies are most populous, which proceeds from their superior riches.

42 The same practice was common in Rome, but Cicero seems not to think this evidence so certain as the testimony of free citizens. (*Pro Cælio*.)

43 Epistle 122. The inhuman sports exhibited at Rome may justly be considered too as an effect of the people's contempt for slaves, and was also a great cause of the general inhumanity of their princes and rulers. Who can read the accounts of the amphitheatrical entertainments without horror? Or who is surprised that the emperors should treat that people in the same way the people treated their inferiors? One's humanity on that occasion is apt to renew the barbarous wish of Caligula, that the people had but one neck. A man could almost be pleased by a single blow to put an end to such a race of monsters. "You may thank God," says the author above cited (Epistle 7), addressing himself to the Roman people, "that you have a master (viz., the mild and merciful Nero) who is incapable of learning cruelty from your example." This was spoken in the beginning of his reign; but he fitted them very well afterwards, and no doubt was considerably improved by the sight of the barbarous objects to which he had from his infancy been accustomed.

44 We may here observe that if domestic slavery really increased populousness, it would be an exception to the general rule, that the happiness of any society and its populousness are necessary attendants. A master, from humour or interest, may make his slaves very unhappy, and yet be careful, from interest, to increase their number. Their marriage is not a matter of choice with them, no more than any other action of their life.

45 Ten thousand slaves in a day have been often sold for the use of the Romans at Delus in Cilicia.—Strabo, lib. 14.

46 As *servus* was the name of the genus, and *verna* of the species, without any correlative, this forms a strong presumption that the latter were by far the least numerous. It is a universal observation which we may form upon language that where two related parts of a whole bear any proportion to each other in numbers, rank, or consideration, there are always correlative terms invented which answer to both the parts, and express their mutual relation. If they bear no proportion to each other, the term is only invented for the less, and marks its distinction from the whole. Thus man and woman, master and servant, father and son, prince and subject, stranger and citizen are correlative terms; but the words—seaman, carpenter, smith, tailor, etc., have no correspondent terms which express those who are no seaman, no carpenter, etc. Languages differ very much with regard to the particular words where this distinction obtains, and may thence afford very strong inferences concerning the manners and customs of different nations. The military government of the Roman emperors had exalted the soldiery so high that they balanced all the other orders of the state; hence *miles* and *paganus* became relative terms, a thing till then unknown to ancient, and still so to modern languages. Modern superstition has exalted the clergy so high that they overbalance the whole state; hence clergy and laity are terms opposed in all modern languages, and in these alone. And from the same principles I infer that if the number of slaves bought by the Romans from foreign countries had not extremely exceeded those bred at home, *verna* would have had a correlative which would have expressed the former species of slaves; but these, it would seem, composed the main body of the ancient slaves, and the latter were but a few exceptions.

47 *Verna* is used by the Roman writers as a word equivalent to *scurra*, on account of the petulance and impudence of those slaves. (Mart., lib. 1, ep. 42.) Horace also mentions the *vernæ procaces*; and Petronius (cap. 24), *vernula urbanitas*. Seneca (*de provid.*, cap. 1), *vernularum licentia*.

48 It is computed in the West Indies that a stock of slaves grow worse five per cent. every year unless new slaves be bought to recruit them. They are not able to keep up their number even in those warm countries where clothes and provisions are so easily got. How much more must this happen in European countries, and in or near great cities?

49 Corn. Nepos in *Vita Attici*. We may remark that Atticus's estate lay chiefly in Epirus, which being a remote, desolate place, would render it profitable for him to rear slaves there.

50 κλινοποι οί, makers of those beds which the ancients lay upon at meals.

51 "Non temere ancillæ ejus rei causa comparantur ut pariant" (*Digest.* lib. 5, tit. 3, *de hæred. petit. lex* 27). The following texts are to the same purpose:—"Spadonem morbosum non esse, neque vitiosum, verius mihi videtur; sed sanum esse, sicuti illum qui unum testiculum habet, qui etiam generare potest" (*Digest.* lib. 2, tit. 1, *de ædilitio edicto, lex* 6, § 2). "Sin autem quis ita spado sit, ut tam necessaria pars corporis penitus absit, morbosus est" (*Id. lex* 7). His impotence, it seems, was only regarded so far as his health or life might be affected by it; in other respects he was full as valuable. The same reasoning is employed with regard to female slaves. "Quæritur de ea muliere quæ semper mortuos parit, an morbosa sit? et ait Sabinus, si vulvæ vitio hoc contingit, morbosam esse" (*Id. lex* 14). It has even been doubted whether a woman pregnant was morbid or vitiated, and it is determined that she is sound, not on account of the value of her offspring, but because it is the natural part or office of women to bear children. "Si mulier prægnans venerit, inter omnes convenit sanam eam esse. Maximum enim ac præcipuum munus fœminarum accipere ac tueri conceptum. Puerperam quoque sanam esse; si modo nihil extrinsecus accedit, quod corpus ejus in aliquam valetudinem immitteret. De sterili Cœlius distinguere Trebatium dicit, ut si natura sterilis sit, sana sit; si vitio corporis, contra" (*Id.*).

52 The slaves in the great houses had little rooms assigned them, called *cellæ*; whence the name of cell was transferred to the monk's room in a convent. See further on this head, Just. Lipsius, Saturn. 1, cap. 14. These form strong presumptions against the marriage and propagation of the family slaves.

53 Tacitus blames it—*De morib. Germ.*

54 *De fraterno amore*. Seneca also approves of the exposing of sickly, infirm children (*De ira*, lib. i. cap. 15).

55 The practice of leaving great sums of money to friends, though one had near relations, was common in Greece as well as Rome, as we may gather from Lucian. This practice prevails much less in modern times; and Ben Jonson's *Volpone* is therefore almost entirely extracted from ancient authors, and suits better the manners of those times.

It may justly be thought that the liberty of divorces in Rome was another discouragement to marriage. Such a practice prevents not quarrels from humour, but rather increases them; and occasions also those from interest, which are much more dangerous and destructive. Perhaps too the unnatural lusts of the ancients ought to be taken into consideration as of some moment.

56 Cæsar gave the centurions ten times the gratuity of the common soldiers (*De bell. Gallico*, lib. viii.). In the Rhodian cartel, mentioned afterwards, no distinction in the ransom was made on account of ranks in the army.

57 Plin. lib. 18, cap. 3. The same author, in cap. 6, says, “Verumque fatentibus latifundia perdidere Italiam; jam vero et provincias. Sex domo semissem Africæ possidebant, cum interfecit eos Nero princeps.” In this view the barbarous butchery committed by the first Roman emperors was not perhaps so destructive to the public as we may imagine. These never ceased till they had extinguished all the illustrious families which had enjoyed the plunder of the world during the latter ages of the republic. The new nobles who rose in their place were less splendid, as we learn from Tacit. *Ann.* lib. 3, cap. 55.

58 The ancient soldiers, being free citizens above the lowest rank, were all married. Our modern soldiers are either forced to live unmarried, or their marriages turn to small account towards the increase of mankind—a circumstance which ought, perhaps, to be taken into consideration, as of some consequence in favour of the ancients.

59 What is the advantage of the column after it has broken the enemy's line? Only that it then takes them in flank, and dissipates whatever stands near it by a fire from all sides; but till it has broken them, does it not present a flank to the enemy, and that exposed to their musketry, and, what is much worse, to their cannon?

60 Inst. lib. 2, cap. 6. It is true the same law seems to have been continued till the time of Justinian, but abuses introduced by barbarism are not always corrected by civility.

61 Lysias, who was himself of the popular faction and very narrowly escaped from the Thirty Tyrants, says that the democracy was as violent a government as the oligarchy. Orat. 24, *de statu. popul.*

62 Orat. 24. And in Orat. 29 he mentions the factious spirit of the popular assemblies as the only cause why these illegal punishments should displease.

63 Lib. 3. The country in Europe in which I have observed the factions to be most violent, and party hatred the strongest, is Ireland. This goes so far as to cut off even the most common intercourse of civilities between the Protestants and Catholics. Their cruel insurrections, and the severe revenges which they have taken of each other, are the causes of this mutual ill-will, which is the chief source of the disorder, poverty, and depopulation of that country. The Greek factions I imagine to have been inflamed still to a higher degree of rage, the revolutions being commonly more frequent, and the maxims of assassination much more avowed and acknowledged.

64 Diod. Sic., lib. 14. Isocrates says there were only 5000 banished. He makes the number of those killed amount to 1500. Areop. *Æschines contra Ctesiph.* assigns precisely the same number. Seneca (*De tranq. anim.* cap. 5) says 1300.

65 We shall mention from Diodorus Siculus alone a few which passed in the course of sixty years during the most shining age of Greece. There were banished from Sybaris 500 of the nobles and their partisans (lib. 12 p. 77, *ex edit.* Rhodomanni); of Chians, 600 citizens banished (lib. 13 p. 189); at Ephesus, 340 killed, 1000 banished (lib. 13 p. 223); of Cyrenians, 500 nobles killed, all the rest banished (lib. 14 p. 263); the Corinthians killed 120, banished 500 (lib. 14 p. 304); Phæbidas the Spartan banished 300 Bæotians (lib. 15 p. 342). Upon the fall of the Lacedemonians, democracies were restored in many cities, and severe vengeance taken of the nobles, after the Greek manner. But matters did not end there, for the banished nobles, returning in many places, butchered their adversaries at Phialæ in Corinth, in Megara, in Phlasiæ. In this last place they killed 300 of the people; but these again revolting, killed above 600 of the nobles and banished the rest (lib. 15 p. 357). In Arcadia 1400 banished, besides many killed. The banished retired to Sparta and Pallantium. The latter delivered up to their countrymen, and all killed (lib. 15 p. 373). Of the banished from Argos and Thebes there were 500 in the Spartan army (*id.* p. 374). Here is a detail of the most remarkable of Agathocles' cruelties from the same author. The people before his usurpation had banished 600 nobles (lib. 19 p. 655). Afterwards that tyrant, in concurrence with the people, killed 4000 nobles and banished 6000 (*id.* p. 647). He killed 4000 people at Gela (*id.* p. 741). By Agathocles' brother 8000 banished from Syracuse (lib. 20 p. 757). The inhabitants of Ægesta, to the number of 40,000, were killed—man, woman, and child; and with tortures, for the sake of their money (*id.* p. 802). All the relations—viz., father, brother, children, grandfather, of his Libyan army, killed (*id.* p. 103). He killed 7000 exiles after capitulation (*id.* p. 816). It is to be remarked that Agathocles was a man of great sense and courage; his violent tyranny, therefore, is a stronger proof of the manners of the age.

66 In order to recommend his client to the favour of the people, he enumerates all the sums he had expended. When χορηγος, 30 minas; upon a chorus of men, 20 minas; επιρριχιστας, 8 minas; ανδρασι χορηγων, 50 minas; κυκλικω χορω, 3 minas; seven times trierarch, where he spent 6 talents: taxes, once 30 minas, another time 40; γυμνασιαρχων, 12 minas; χορηγος παιδικω χορω, 15 minas; κομοδοις χορηγων, 18 minas; επιρριχισταις αγενειοις, 7 minas; τριηρει αμιλλομενος, 15 minas; αρχιθεωρος, 30 minas. In the whole, ten talents 38 minas—an immense sum for an Athenian fortune, and what alone would be esteemed great riches (Orat. 20). It is true, he says, the law did not oblige him absolutely to be at so much expense, not above a fourth; but without the favour of the people nobody was so much as safe, and this was the only way to gain it. See further, Orat. 24, *de pop. statu*. In another place, he introduces a speaker who says that he had spent his whole fortune—and an immense one, eighty talents—for the people (Orat. 25, *de prob. Evandri*). The μετοικοι, or strangers, find, says he, if they do not contribute largely enough to the people's fancy, that they have reason to repent (Orat. 30, *contra Phil.*). You may see with what care Demosthenes displays his expenses of this nature, when he pleads for himself *de corona*; and how he exaggerates Midias's stinginess in this particular, in his accusation of that criminal. All this, by the by, is the mark of a very iniquitous judicature: and yet the Athenians valued themselves on having the most legal and regular administration of any people in Greece.

67 The authorities cited above are all historians, orators, and philosophers whose testimony is unquestioned. It is dangerous to rely upon writers who deal in ridicule and satire. What will posterity, for instance, infer from this passage of Dr. Swift? "I told him that in the kingdom of Tribnia (Britain), by the natives called Langdon (London), where I had sojourned some time in my travels, the bulk of the people consist in a manner wholly of discoverers, witnesses, informers, accusers, prosecutors, evidences, swearers, together with their several subservient and subaltern instruments, all under the colours, the conduct, and pay of ministers of state and their deputies. The plots in that kingdom are usually the workmanship of those persons," etc. (*Gulliver's Travels*.) Such a representation might suit the government of Athens, but not that of England, which is a prodigy even in modern times for humanity, justice, and liberty. Yet the Doctor's satire, though carried to extremes, as is usual with him, even beyond other satirical writers, did not altogether want an object. The Bishop of Rochester, who was his friend, and of the same party, had been banished a little before by a bill of attainder with great justice, but without such a proof as was legal, or according to the strict forms of common law.

68 Lib. 2. There were 8000 killed during the siege, and the whole captives amounted to 30,000. Diodorus Siculus (lib. 17) says only 13,000; but he accounts for this small number by saying that the Tyrians had sent away beforehand part of their wives and children to Carthage.

69 Lib. 5. He makes the number of the citizens amount to 30,000.

70 In general there is more candour and sincerity in ancient historians, but less exactness and care, than in the moderns. Our speculative factions, especially those of religion, throw such an illusion over our minds that men seem to regard impartiality to their adversaries and to heretics as a vice or weakness; but the commonness of books, by means of printing, has obliged modern historians to be more careful in avoiding contradictions and incongruities. Diodorus Siculus is a good writer, but it is with pain I see his narration contradict in so many particulars the two most authentic pieces of all Greek history—viz., Xenophon's Expedition and Demosthenes' Orations. Plutarch and Appian seem scarce ever to have read Cicero's Epistles.

71 Diogenes Laertius (in *vita Empedoclis*) says that Agrigentum contained only 800,000 inhabitants.

72 The country that supplied this number was not above a third of Italy—viz., the Pope's dominions, Tuscany, and a part of the kingdom of Naples; but perhaps in those early times there were very few slaves except in Rome, or the great cities.

73 Plutarch (in *vita Cæs.*) makes the number that Cæsar fought with amount only to three millions; Julian (in *Cæsaribus*) to two.

74 Argos seems also to have been a great city, for Lysias contents himself with saying that it did not exceed Athens. (Orat. 34.)

75 Orat. *contra Verem*, lib. 4, cap. 52. Strabo, lib. 6, says it was twenty-two miles in compass; but then we are to consider that it contained two harbours within it, one of which was a very large one, and might be regarded as a kind of bay.

76 Demosthenes assigns 20,000.

77 Lib. 2. Diodorus Siculus's account perfectly agrees (lib. 12).

78 We are to observe that when Dionysius Halicarnassæus says that if we regard the ancient walls of Rome the extent of the city will not appear greater than that of Athens, he must mean the Acropolis and high town only. No ancient author ever speaks of the Pyræum, Phalerus, and Munychia as the same with Athens; much less can it be supposed that Dionysius would consider the matter in that light after the walls of Cimon and Pericles were destroyed and Athens was entirely separated from these other towns. This observation destroys all Vossius's reasonings and introduces common sense into these calculations.

79 The same author affirms that Corinth had once 460,000 slaves, Ægina 470,000; but the foregoing arguments hold stronger against these facts, which are indeed entirely absurd and impossible. It is however remarkable that Athenæus cites so great an authority as Aristotle for this last fact; and the scholiast on Pindar mentions the same number of slaves in Ægina.

80 Demost. *contra Lept.* The Athenians brought yearly from Pontus 400,000 medimni or bushels of corn, as appeared from the custom-house books; and this was the greatest part of their importation. This, by the by, is a strong proof that there is some great mistake in the foregoing passage of Athenæus, for Attica itself was so barren in corn that it produced not enough even to maintain the peasants. Tit. Liv., lib. 43; cap. 6, Lucian, in his *navigium sive vota*, says that a ship, which by the dimensions he gives seems to have been about the size of our third rates, carried as much corn as would maintain all Attica for a twelvemonth. But perhaps Athens was decayed at that time, and besides it is not safe to trust such loose rhetorical calculations.

81 Diod. Sic., lib. 17. When Alexander attacked Thebes we may safely conclude that almost all the inhabitants were present. Whoever is acquainted with the spirit of the Greeks, especially of the Thebans, will never suspect that any of them would desert their country when it was reduced to such extreme peril and distress. As Alexander took the town by storm, all those who bore arms were put to the sword without mercy, and they amounted only to 6000 men. Among these were some strangers and manumitted slaves. The captives, consisting of old men, women, children, and slaves, were sold, and they amounted to 30,000. We may therefore conclude that the free citizens in Thebes, of both sexes and all ages, were near 24,000, the strangers and slaves about 12,000, These last, we may observe, were somewhat fewer in proportion than at Athens; as is reasonable to imagine from this circumstance, that Athens was a town of more trade to support slaves, and of more entertainment to allure strangers. It is also to be remarked that thirty-six thousand was the whole number of people, both in the city of Thebes and the neighbouring territory; a very moderate number, it must be confessed, and this computation being founded in facts which appear undisputable, must have great weight in the present controversy. The above-mentioned number of Rhodians, too, were all the inhabitants of the island who were free and able to bear arms.

82 *De rep. Laced.* This passage is not easily reconciled with that of Plutarch above, who says that Sparta had 9000 citizens.

83 Strabo, lib. 5, says that the Emperor Augustus prohibited the raising houses higher than seventy feet. In another passage, lib. 16, he speaks of the houses of Rome as remarkably high. See also to the same purpose Vitruvius, lib. 2, cap. 8. Aristides the Sophist, in his oration εἰς Ρώμην, says that Rome consisted of cities on the top of cities; and that if one were to spread it out and unfold it, it would cover the whole surface of Italy. Where an author indulges himself in such extravagant declamations, and gives so much in to the hyperbolical style, one knows not how far he must be reduced. But this reasoning seems natural: if Rome was built in so scattered a manner as Dionysius says, and ran so much into the country, there must have been very few streets where the houses were raised so high. It is only for want of ground that anybody builds in that inconvenient manner.

84 Lib. 2, epist. 16; lib. 5, epist. 6. It is true Pliny there describes a country house; but since that was the idea which the ancients formed of a magnificent and convenient building, the great men would certainly build the same way in town. "In laxitatem ruris excurrunt," says Seneca of the rich and voluptuous, epist. 114. Valerius Maximus, lib. 4, cap. 4, speaking of Cincinnatus' field of four acres, says: "Augustus se habitare nunc putat, cujus domus tantum patet quantum Cincinnati rura patuerant." To the same purpose see lib. 36, cap. 15; also lib. 18, cap. 2.

85 “Mœnia ejus (Romæ) collegere ambitu imperatoribus, censoribusque Vespasianis, A.U.C. 828, pass. xiii. MCC, complexa montes septem, ipsa dividitur in regiones quatuordecim, compita earum 265. Ejusdem spatii mensura, currente a milliario in capite Rom. Fori statuto, ad singulas portas, quæ sunt hodie numero 37, ita ut duodecim portæ semel numerentur, prætereanturque ex veteribus septem, quæ esse desierunt, efficit passuum per directum 30,775. Ad extrema vero tectorum cum castris prætoris ab eodem Milliario, per vicos omnium viarum, mensura collegit paulo amplius septuaginta millia passuum. Quo si quis altitudinem tectorum addat, dignam profecto, æstimationem concipiat, fateaturque nullius urbis magnitudinem in toto orbe potuisse ei comparari.” (Pliny, lib. 3, cap. 5.)

All the best manuscripts of Pliny read the passage as here cited, and fix the compass of the walls of Rome to be thirteen miles. The question is, what Pliny means by 30,775 paces, and how that number was formed? The manner in which I conceive it is this: Rome was a semicircular area of thirteen miles circumference. The Forum, and consequently the Milliarium, we know was situated on the banks of the Tiber, and near the centre of the circle, or upon the diameter of the semicircular area. Though there were thirty-seven gates to Rome, yet only twelve of them had straight streets, leading from them to the Milliarium. Pliny, therefore, having assigned the circumference of Rome, and knowing that that alone was not sufficient to give us a just notion of its surface, uses this further method. He supposes all the streets leading from the Milliarium to the twelve gates to be laid together into one straight line, and supposes we run along that line so as to count each gate once, in which case, he says that the whole line is 30,775 paces; or, in other words, that each street or radius of the semicircular area is upon an average two miles and a half, and the whole length of Rome is five miles, and its breadth about half as much, besides the scattered suburbs.

Père Hardouin understands this passage in the same manner, with regard to the laying together the several streets of Rome into one line in order to compose 30,775 paces; but then he supposes that streets led from the Milliarium to every gate, and that no street exceeded 800 paces in length. But (1) a semicircular area whose radius was only 800 paces could never have a circumference near thirteen miles, the compass of Rome as assigned by Pliny. A radius of two miles and a half forms very nearly that circumference. (2) There is an absurdity in supposing a city so built as to have streets running to its centre from every gate in its circumference. These streets must interfere as they approach. (3) This diminishes too much from the greatness of ancient Rome, and reduces that city below even Bristol or Rotterdam.

The sense which Vossius, in his *Observationes Variæ*, puts on this passage of Pliny errs widely in the other extreme. One manuscript of no authority, instead of thirteen miles, has assigned thirty miles for the compass of the walls of Rome; and Vossius understands this only of the curvilinear part of the circumference, supposing that, as the Tiber formed the diameter, there were no walls built on that side. But (1) this reading is allowed contrary to almost all the manuscripts. (2) Why should Pliny, a concise writer, repeat the compass of the walls of Rome in two successive sentences? (3) Why repeat it with so sensible a variation? (4) What is the meaning of Pliny’s mentioning twice the Milliarium

if a line was measured that had no dependence on the Milliarium? (5) Aurelian's wall is said by Vopiscus to have been drawn *laxiore ambitu*, and to have comprehended all the buildings and suburbs on the north side of the Tiber, yet its compass was only fifty miles; and even here critics suspect some mistake or corruption in the text. It is not probable that Rome would diminish from Augustus to Aurelian. It remained still the capital of the same empire; and none of the civil wars in that long period, except the tumults on the death of Maximus and Balbinus, ever affected the city. Caracalla is said by Aurelius Victor to have increased Rome. (6) There are no remains of ancient buildings which mark any such greatness of Rome. Vossius's reply to this objection seems absurd—that the rubbish would sink sixty or seventy feet below ground. It appears from Spartian (*in vita Severi*) that the five-mile stone *in via Lavicana* was out of the city. (7) Olympiodorus and Publius Victor fix the number of houses in Rome to be between forty and fifty thousand. (8) The very extravagance of the consequences drawn by this critic, as well as Lipsius, if they be necessary, destroys the foundation on which they are grounded—that Rome contained fourteen millions of inhabitants, while the whole kingdom of France contains only five, according to his computation, etc.

The only objection to the sense which we have affixed above to the passage of Pliny seems to lie in this, that Pliny, after mentioning the thirty-seven gates of Rome, assigns only a reason for suppressing the seven old ones, and says nothing of the eighteen gates, the streets leading from which terminated, according to my opinion, before they reached the Forum. But as Pliny was writing to the Romans, who perfectly knew the disposition of the streets, it is not strange he should take a circumstance for granted which was so familiar to everybody. Perhaps, too, many of these gates led to wharves upon the river.

86 Not to take the people too much from their business, Augustus ordained the distribution of corn to be made only thrice a year; but the people, finding the monthly distribution more convenient (as preserving, I suppose, a more regular economy in their family), desired to have them restored. (Sueton. August. cap. 40.) Had not some of the people come from some distance for their corn, Augustus's precaution seems superfluous.

87 Quintus Curtius says its walls were only ten miles in circumference when founded by Alexander (lib. 4, cap. 8). Strabo, who had travelled to Alexandria, as well as Diodorus Siculus, says it was scarce four miles long, and in most places about a mile broad (lib. 17). Pliny says it resembled a Macedonian cassock, stretching out in the corners (lib. 5, cap. 10). Notwithstanding this bulk of Alexandria, which seems but moderate, Diodorus Siculus, speaking of its circuit as drawn by Alexander (which it never exceeded, as we learn from Ammianus Marcellinus, lib. 22, cap. 16), says it was *μεγεθει διαφεροντα*, extremely great (*ibid.*). The reason why he assigns for its surpassing all cities of the world (for he excepts not Rome) is that it contained 300,000 free inhabitants. He also mentions the revenues of the kings—viz., 6000 talents—as another circumstance to the same purpose, no such mighty sum in our eyes, even though we make allowances for the different value of money. What Strabo says of the neighbouring country means only that it was well peopled, *οικουμενα καλως*. Might not one affirm, without any great hyperbole, that the whole banks of the river from Gravesend to Windsor are one city? This is even more than Strabo says of the banks of the lake Mareotis, and of the canal to Canopus. It is a vulgar saying in Italy that the King of Sardinia has but one town in Piedmont—for it is all a town. Agrippa in Josephus (*de bello Judaie*, lib. 2, cap. 16), to make his audience comprehend the excessive greatness of Alexandria, which he endeavours to magnify, describes only the compass of the city as drawn by Alexander, a clear proof that the bulk of the inhabitants were lodged there, and that the neighbouring country was no more than what might be expected about all great towns, very well cultivated and well peopled.

88 He says *ἐλευθεροι*, not *πολιται*, which last expression must have been understood of citizens alone, and grown men.

89 He says (in *Nerone*, cap. 30) that a portico or piazza of it was 3000 feet long; “*tanta laxitas ut porticus triplices milliarias haberet.*” He cannot mean three miles, for the whole extent of the house from the Palatine to the Esquiline was not near so great. So when Vopiscus, in *Aureliano*, mentions a portico of Sallust’s gardens, which he calls *porticus milliariensis*, it must be understood of a thousand feet. So also Horace—

“Nulla decempedis
Metata privatis opacam
Porticus excipiebat Arcton.” (Lib. ii. ode 15.)

So also in lib. i. Satyr. 8—

“Mille pedes in fronte, trecentos cippus in agrum
Hic dabat.”

90 Lib. ix. cap. 10. His expression is *ἄνθρωπος*, not *πολιτης*; inhabitant, not citizen.

91 Such were Alexandria, Antioch, Carthage, Ephesus, Lyons, etc., in the Roman Empire. Such are even Bordeaux, Toulouse, Dijon, Rennes, Rouen, Aix, etc., in France; Dublin, Edinburgh, York, in the British dominions.

92 The warm southern colonies also become more healthful; and it is remarkable that in the Spanish histories of the first discovery and conquest of these countries they appear to have been very healthful, being then well peopled and cultivated. No account of the sickness or decay of Cortes's or Pizarro's small armies.

93 He seems to have lived about the time of the younger Africanus. (Lib. i. cap. 1.)

94 Cæsar, *De bello Gallico*, lib. 16. Strabo (lib. 7) says the Gauls were not much more improved than the Germans.

95 Ancient Gaul was more extensive than modern France.

96 It appears from Cæsar's account that the Gauls had no domestic slaves, who formed a different order from the Plebes. The whole common people were indeed a kind of slaves to the nobility, as the people of Poland are at this day; and a nobleman of Gaul had sometimes ten thousand dependants of this kind. Nor can we doubt that the armies were composed of the people as well as of the nobility. An army of 100,000 noblemen from a very small state is incredible. The fighting men amongst the Helvetii were the fourth part of the whole inhabitants—a clear proof that all the males of military age bore arms. See Cæsar, *De bello Gall.*, lib. 1.

We may remark that the numbers in Cæsar's commentaries can be more depended on than those of any other ancient author, because of the Greek translation which still remains, and which checks the Latin original.

97 "Nec numero Hispanos, nec robore Gallos, nec calliditate Pœnos, nec artibus Græcos, nec denique hoc ipso hujus gentis, ac terræ domestico nativoque sensu, Italos ipsos ac Latinos—superavimus." (*De harusp. resp.*, cap. 9.) The disorders of Spain seem to have been almost proverbial: "Nec impacatos a tergo horrebis Iberos." (Virg. *Georg.*, lib. 3.) The Iberi are here plainly taken by a poetical figure for robbers in general.

98 Though the observations of l'Abbé du Bos should be admitted that Italy is now warmer than in former times, the consequence may not be necessary that it is more populous or better cultivated. If the other countries of Europe were more savage and woody, the cold winds that blew from them might affect the climate of Italy.

99 The inhabitants of Marseilles lost not their superiority over the Gauls in commerce and the mechanic arts till the Roman dominion turned the latter from arms to agriculture and civil life. (See Strabo, lib. 4.) That author, in several places, repeats the observation concerning the improvement arising from the Roman arts and civility, and he lived at the time when the change was new and would be more sensible. So also Pliny: “Quis enim non, communicato orbe terrarum, majestate Romani imperii, profecisse vitam putet, commercio rerum ac societate festae pacis, omniaque etiam, quae occulta antea fuerant, in promiscuo usu facta.” (Lib. 14, proëm.) “Numine deum electa [speaking of Italy] quae coelum ipsum clarius faceret, sparsa congregaret imperia, ritusque molliret, et tot populorum discordes, ferasque linguas fermonis commercio contraheret ad colloquia, et humanitatem homini daret; breviterque, una cunctarum gentium in toto orbe patria fieret.” (Lib. 2, cap. 5.) Nothing can be stronger to this purpose than the following passage from Tertullian, who lived about the age of Severus:—“Certe quidem ipse orbis in promptu est, cultior de die et instructor pristino. Omnia jam pervia, omnia nota, omnia negotiosa. Solitudines famosas retro fundi amoenissimi oblitteraverunt, silvas arva domuerunt, feras pecora fugaverunt; arenae seruntur, saxa panguntur, paludes eliquantur, tantae urbes, quantae non casae quondam. Jam nec insulae horrent, nec scopuli terrent; ubique domus, ubique populus, ubique respublica, ubique vita. Summum testimonium frequentiae humanae, onerosi sumus mundo, vix nobis elementa sufficiunt; et necessitates arctiores, et quaerelae apud omnes, dum jam nos natura non sustinet.” (*De anima*, cap. 30.) The air of rhetoric and declamation which appears in this passage diminishes somewhat from its authority, but does not entirely destroy it. The same remark may be extended to the following passage of Aristides the Sophist, who lived in the age of Adrian. “The whole world,” says he, addressing himself to the Romans, “seems to keep one holiday, and mankind, laying aside the sword which they formerly wore, now betake themselves to feasting and to joy. The cities, forgetting their ancient contentions, preserve only one emulation, which shall embellish itself most by every art and ornament? Theatres everywhere arise, amphitheatres, porticoes, aqueducts, temples, schools, academies; and one may safely pronounce that the sinking world has been again raised by your auspicious empire. Nor have cities alone received an increase of ornament and beauty; but the whole earth, like a garden or paradise, is cultivated and adorned; insomuch that such of mankind as are placed out of the limits of your empire (who are but few) seem to merit our sympathy and compassion.”

It is remarkable that though Diodorus Siculus makes the inhabitants of Egypt, when conquered by the Romans, amount only to three millions, yet Josephus (*De bello Jud.*, lib. 2, cap. 16) says that its inhabitants, excluding those of Alexandria, were seven millions and a half in the reign of Nero, and he expressly says that he drew this account from the books of the Roman publicans who levied the poll-tax. Strabo (lib. 17) praises the superior police of the Romans with regard to the finances of Egypt above that of its former monarchs, and no part of administration is more essential to the happiness of a people; yet we read in Athenæus (lib. 1, cap. 25), who flourished during the reign of the Antonines, that the town Mareia, near Alexandria, which was formerly a large city, had dwindled into a village. This is not, properly

speaking, a contradiction. Suidas (August) says that the Emperor Augustus, having numbered the whole Roman Empire, found it contained only 4,101,017 men (ἄνδρες). There is here surely some great mistake, either in the author or transcriber; but this authority, feeble as it is, may be sufficient to counterbalance the exaggerated accounts of Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus with regard to more early times.

100 Lib. 2, cap. 62. It may perhaps be imagined that Polybius, being dependent on Rome, would naturally extol the Roman dominion; but, in the first place, Polybius, though one sees sometimes instances of his caution, discovers no symptoms of flattery. Secondly, this opinion is only delivered in a single stroke, by the by, while he is intent upon another subject, and it is allowed, if there be any suspicion of an author's insincerity, that these oblique propositions discover his real opinion better than his more formal and direct assertions.

101 I must confess that that discourse of Plutarch concerning the silence of the oracles is in general of so odd a texture, and so unlike his other productions, that one is at a loss what judgment to form of it. It is written in dialogue, which is a method of composition that Plutarch commonly little affects. The personages he introduces advance very wild, absurd, and contradictory opinions, more like visionary systems or ravings of Plato than the solid sense of Plutarch. There runs also through the whole an air of superstition and credulity which resembles very little the spirit that appears in other philosophical compositions of that author; for it is remarkable that though Plutarch be an historian as superstitious as Herodotus or Livy, yet there is scarcely in all antiquity a philosopher less superstitious, excepting Cicero and Lucian. I must therefore confess that a passage of Plutarch, cited from this discourse, has much less authority with me than if it had been found in most of his other compositions.

There is only one other discourse of Plutarch liable to like objections—viz., that concerning those whose punishment is delayed by the Deity. It is also written in dialogue, contains like superstitious, wild visions, and seems to have been chiefly composed in rivalry to Plato, particularly his last book, *De Republica*.

And here I cannot but observe that Monsieur Fontenelle, a writer eminent for candour, seems to have departed a little from his usual character when he endeavours to throw a ridicule upon Plutarch on account of passages to be met with in this dialogue concerning oracles. The absurdities here put into the mouths of the several personages are not to be ascribed to Plutarch. He makes them refute each other, and in general he seems to intend the ridiculing of those very opinions which Fontenelle would ridicule him for maintaining. (See *Histoires des Oracles*.)

102 He was contemporary with Cæsar and Augustus.

OF THE ORIGINAL CONTRACT.

As no party, in the present age, can support itself without a philosophical or speculative system of principles annexed to its political or practical one, we accordingly find that each of the parties into which this nation is divided has reared up a fabric of the former kind, in order to protect and cover that scheme of actions which it pursues. The people being commonly very rude builders, especially in this speculative way, and more especially still when actuated by party zeal, it is natural to imagine that their workmanship must be a little unshapely, and discover evident marks of that violence and hurry in which it was raised. The one party, by tracing up the origin of government to the Deity, endeavour to render government so sacred and {p175} inviolate that it must be little less than sacrilege, however disorderly it may become, to touch or invade it in the smallest article. The other party, by founding government altogether on the consent of the people, suppose that there is a kind of original contract by which the subjects have reserved the power of resisting their sovereign whenever they find themselves aggrieved by that authority with which they have, for certain purposes, voluntarily entrusted him. These are the speculative principles of the two parties, and these too are the practical consequences deduced from them.

I shall venture to affirm that both these systems of speculative principles are just, though not in the sense intended by the parties; and that both the schemes of practical consequences are prudent, though not in the extremes to which each party, in opposition to the other, has commonly endeavoured to carry them.

That the Deity is the ultimate author of all government will never be denied by any who admits a general providence, and allows that all events in the universe are conducted by a uniform plan and directed to wise purposes. As it is impossible for the human race to subsist, at least in any comfortable or secure state, without the protection of government, government must certainly have been intended by that beneficent Being,

who means the good of all His creatures; and as it has universally, in fact, taken place in all countries and all ages, we may conclude, with still greater certainty, that it was intended by that omniscient Being, who can never be deceived by any event or operation. But since he gave rise to it, not by any particular or miraculous interposition but by his concealed and universal efficacy, a sovereign cannot, properly speaking, be called his vicegerent in any other sense than every power or force being derived from him may be said to act by his commission. Whatever actually happens is comprehended in the general plan or intention of providence; nor has the greatest and most lawful prince any more reason, upon that account, to plead a peculiar sacredness or inviolable authority, than {p176} an inferior magistrate, or even a usurper, or even a robber and a pirate. The same divine superintendent who, for wise purposes, invested an Elizabeth or a Henry[103] with authority, did also, for purposes no doubt equally wise, though unknown, bestow power on a Borgia or an Angria. The same causes which gave rise to the sovereign power in every state, established likewise every petty jurisdiction in it, and every limited authority. A constable therefore, no less than a king, acts by a divine commission, and possesses an indefeasible right.

When we consider how nearly equal all men are in their bodily force, and even in their mental powers and faculties, till cultivated by education, we must necessarily allow that nothing but their own consent could at first associate them together, and subject them to any authority. The people, if we trace government to its first origin in the woods and deserts, are the source of all power and jurisdiction, and voluntarily, for the sake of peace and order, abandoned their native liberty, and received laws from their equal and companion. The conditions upon which they were willing to submit were either expressed, or were so clear and obvious that it might well be esteemed superfluous to express them. If this, then, be meant by the original contract, it cannot be denied that all government is at first founded on a contract, and that the most ancient rude combinations of mankind were formed entirely by that principle. In vain are we sent to the records to seek for this charter of our liberties. It was not written on parchment, nor yet on leaves or barks of trees. It preceded the use of writing and all the other civilized arts of life. But we trace it plainly in the nature of man, and in the equality which we find in all the individuals of that species. The force which now prevails, and which is founded on fleets and armies, is plainly

political, and derived from authority, the effect of established government. A man's natural force consists only in the vigour of his limbs and the ^{p177} firmness of his courage, which could never subject multitudes to the command of one. Nothing but their own consent, and their sense of the advantages of peace and order, could have had that influence.

But philosophers who have embraced a party (if that be not a contradiction in terms) are not contented with these concessions. They assert, not only that government in its earliest infancy arose from consent or the voluntary combination of the people, but also that, even at present, when it has attained its full maturity, it rests on no other foundation. They affirm that all men are still born equal, and owe allegiance to no prince or government unless bound by the obligation and sanction of a promise. And as no man, without some equivalent, would forgo the advantages of his native liberty and subject himself to the will of another, this promise is always understood to be conditional, and imposes on him no obligation unless he meets with justice and protection from his sovereign. These advantages the sovereign promises him in return, and if he fails in the execution, he has broke, on his part, the articles of engagement, and has thereby freed his subjects from all obligations to allegiance. Such, according to these philosophers, is the foundation of authority in every government, and such the right of resistance possessed by every subject.

But would these reasoners look abroad into the world they would meet with nothing that in the least corresponds to their ideas, or can warrant so refined and philosophical a theory. On the contrary, we find everywhere princes who claim their subjects as their property, and assert their independent right of sovereignty from conquest or succession. We find also everywhere subjects who acknowledge this right in their princes, and suppose themselves born under obligations of obedience to a certain sovereign, as much as under the ties of reverence and duty to certain parents. These connections are always conceived to be equally independent of our consent, in Persia and China; in France and Spain; and even in Holland and England, wherever the doctrines above mentioned have not been carefully ^{p178} inculcated. Obedience or subjection becomes so familiar that most men never make any inquiry about its origin or cause, more than about the principle of gravity, resistance, or the most universal laws of nature. Or if curiosity ever move them, so soon as they learn that they themselves and their ancestors have for several ages, or from time

immemorial, been subject to such a government or such a family, they immediately acquiesce and acknowledge their obligation to allegiance. Were you to preach, in most parts of the world, that political connections are founded altogether on voluntary consent or a mutual promise, the magistrate would soon imprison you, as seditious, for loosening the ties of obedience; if your friends did not shut you up, as delirious, for advancing such absurdities. It is strange that an act of the mind which every individual is supposed to have formed—and after he came to the use of reason too, otherwise it could have no authority—that this act, I say, should be so unknown to all of them, that over the face of the whole earth there scarce remain any traces or memory of it.

But the contract on which government is founded is said to be the original contract, and consequently may be supposed too old to fall under the knowledge of the present generation. If the agreement by which savage men first associated and conjoined their force be here meant, this is acknowledged to be real; but being so ancient, and being obliterated by a thousand changes of government and princes, it cannot now be supposed to retain any authority. If we would say anything to the purpose, we must assert that every particular government which is lawful, and which imposes any duty of allegiance on the subject, was at first founded on consent and a voluntary compact. But besides that this supposes the consent of the fathers to bind the children, even to the most remote generations (which republican writers will never allow), besides this, I say, it is not justified by history or experience in any age or country of the world.

Almost all the governments which exist at present, or {p179} of which there remains any record in story, have been founded originally either on usurpation or conquest, or both, without any pretence of a fair consent or voluntary subjection of the people. When an artful and bold man is placed at the head of an army or faction, it is often easy for him, by employing sometimes violence, sometimes false pretences, to establish his dominion over a people a hundred times more numerous than his partisans. He allows no such open communication that his enemies can know with certainty their number or force. He gives them no leisure to assemble together in a body to oppose him. Even all those who are the instruments of his usurpation may wish his fall, but their ignorance of each other's intentions keeps them in awe, and is the sole cause of his security. By such arts as these many

governments have been established, and this is all the original contract they have to boast of.

The face of the earth is continually changing by the increase of small kingdoms into great empires, by the dissolution of great empires into smaller kingdoms, by the planting of colonies, by the migration of tribes. Is there anything discoverable in all these events but force and violence? Where is the mutual agreement or voluntary association so much talked of?

Even the smoothest way by which a nation may receive a foreign master, by marriage or a will, is not extremely honourable for the people; but supposes them to be disposed of, like a dowry or a legacy, according to the pleasure or interest of their rulers.

But where no force interposes, and election takes place, what is this election so highly vaunted? It is either the combination of a few great men who decide for the whole, and will allow no opposition, or it is the fury of a rabble that follow a seditious leader, who is not known, perhaps, to a dozen among them, and who owes his advancement merely to his own impudence, or to the momentary caprice of his fellows.

Are these disorderly elections, which are rare too, of such ^{p180} mighty authority as to be the only lawful foundation of all government and allegiance?

In reality there is not a more terrible event than a total dissolution of government, which gives liberty to the multitude, and makes the determination or choice of a new establishment depend upon a number which nearly approaches the body of the people; for it never comes entirely to the whole body of them. Every wise man, then, wishes to see, at the head of a powerful and obedient army, a general who may speedily seize the prize and give to the people a master, which they are so unfit to choose for themselves. So little correspondent is fact and reality to those philosophical notions.

Let not the establishment at the Revolution deceive us, or make us so much in love with a philosophical origin to government as to imagine all others monstrous and irregular. Even that event was far from corresponding to these refined ideas. It was only the succession, and that only in the regal part of the government, which was then changed; and it was only the majority of seven hundred who determined that change for near ten millions. I doubt not, indeed, but the bulk of these ten millions acquiesced willingly in the determination; but was the matter left, in the least, to their

choice? Was it not justly supposed to be from that moment decided, and every man punished who refused to submit to the new sovereign? How otherways could the matter have ever been brought to any issue or conclusion?

The Republic of Athens was, I believe, the most extensive democracy which we read of in history. Yet if we make the requisite allowances for the women, the slaves, and the strangers, we shall find that that establishment was not at first made, nor any law ever voted, by a tenth part of those who were bound to pay obedience to it; not to mention the islands and foreign dominions which the Athenians claimed as theirs by right of conquest. And as it is well known that popular assemblies in that city were always full of licence and disorder, notwithstanding the {p181} forms and laws by which they were checked, how much more disorderly must they be where they form not the established constitution, but meet tumultuously on the dissolution of the ancient government in order to give rise to a new one? How chimerical must it be to talk of a choice in any such circumstances?

The Achæans enjoyed the freest and most perfect democracy of all antiquity; yet they employed force to oblige some cities to enter into their league, as we learn from Polybius.

Henry IV. and Henry VII. of England had really no other title to the throne but a parliamentary election; yet they never would acknowledge it, for fear of weakening their authority. Strange! if the only real foundation of all authority be consent and promise.

It is vain to say that all governments are, or should be, at first, founded on popular consent, as much as the necessity of human affairs will admit. This favours entirely my pretension. I maintain that human affairs will never admit of this consent; seldom of the appearance of it. But that conquest or usurpation—that is, in plain terms, force—by dissolving the ancient governments, is the origin of almost all the new ones which ever were established in the world; and that in the few cases, where consent may seem to have taken place, it was commonly so irregular, so confined, or so much intermixed either with fraud or violence, that it cannot have any great authority.

My intention here is not to exclude the consent of the people from being one just foundation of government where it has place. It is surely the best and most sacred of any. I only pretend that it has very seldom had place in

any degree, and never almost in its full extent; and that therefore some other foundation of government must also be admitted.

Were all men possessed of so inflexible a regard to justice that, of themselves, they would totally abstain from the properties of others, they had for ever remained in a state of absolute liberty without subjection to any {p182} magistrates or political society; but this is a state of perfection, of which human nature is justly esteemed incapable. Again, were all men possessed of so just an understanding as always to know their own interest, no form of government had ever been submitted to but what was established on consent, and was fully canvassed by each member of the society; but this state of perfection is likewise much superior to human nature. Reason, history, and experience show us that all political societies have had an origin much less accurate and regular; and were one to choose a period of time when the people's consent was least regarded in public transactions, it would be precisely on the establishment of a new government. In a settled constitution their inclinations are often studied; but during the fury of revolutions, conquests, and public convulsions, military force or political craft usually decides the controversy.

When a new government is established, by whatever means, the people are commonly dissatisfied with it, and pay obedience more from fear and necessity than from any idea of allegiance or of moral obligation. The prince is watchful and jealous, and must carefully guard against every beginning or appearance of insurrection. Time, by degrees, removes all these difficulties, and accustoms the nation to regard, as their lawful or native princes, that family whom at first they considered as usurpers or foreign conquerors. In order to found this opinion, they have no recourse to any notion of voluntary consent or promise, which, they know, never was in this case either expected or demanded. The original establishment was formed by violence, and submitted to from necessity. The subsequent administration is also supported by power, and acquiesced in by the people, not as a matter of choice, but of obligation. They imagine not that their consent gives their prince a title; but they willingly consent because they think that, from long possession, he has acquired a title independent of their choice or inclination.

Should it be said that by living under the dominion {p183} of a prince which one might leave, every individual has given a tacit consent to his authority, and promised him obedience, it may be answered that such

implied consent can only take place where a man imagines that the matter depends on his choice. But where he thinks (as all mankind do who are born under established governments) that by his birth he owes allegiance to a certain prince or certain government, it would be absurd to infer a consent or choice, which he expressly, in this case, renounces and abjures.

Can we seriously say that a poor peasant or artisan has a free choice to leave his own country, when he knows no foreign language or manners, and lives from day to day by the same small wages which he acquires? We may as well assert that a man, by remaining in a vessel, freely consents to the dominion of the master, though he was carried on board while asleep, and must leap into the ocean and perish the moment he leaves her.

What if the prince forbid his subjects to quit his dominions, as in Tiberius's time it was regarded as a crime in a Roman knight that he had attempted to fly to the Parthians, in order to escape the tyranny of that emperor? Or as the ancient Muscovites prohibited all travelling under pain of death? And did a prince observe that many of his subjects were seized with the frenzy of transporting themselves to foreign countries, he would doubtless, with great reason and justice, restrain them, in order to prevent the depopulation of his own kingdom. Would he forfeit the allegiance of all his subjects by so wise and reasonable a law? Yet the freedom of their choice is surely, in that case, ravished from them.

A company of men who should leave their native country in order to people some uninhabited region might dream of recovering their native freedom; but they would soon find that their prince still laid claim to them, and called them his subjects, even in their new settlement. And in this he would but act conformably to the common ideas of mankind. {p184}

The truest tacit consent of this kind which is ever observed is when a foreigner settles in any country, and is beforehand acquainted with the prince and government and laws to which he must submit; yet is his allegiance, though more voluntary, much less expected or depended on than that of a natural born subject. On the contrary, his native prince still asserts a claim to him. And if he punishes not the renegade when he seizes him in war with his new prince's commission, this clemency is not founded on the municipal law, which in all countries condemns the prisoner, but on the consent of princes who have agreed to this indulgence in order to prevent reprisals.

Suppose a usurper, after having banished his lawful prince and royal family, should establish his dominion for ten or a dozen years in any country, and should preserve such exact discipline in his troops and so regular a disposition in his garrisons that no insurrection had ever been raised, or even murmur heard, against his administration, can it be asserted that the people, who in their hearts abhor his treason, have tacitly consented to his authority and promised him allegiance merely because, from necessity, they live under his dominion? Suppose again their natural prince restored, by means of an army which he assembles in foreign countries, they receive him with joy and exultation, and show plainly with what reluctance they had submitted to any other yoke. I may now ask upon what foundation the prince's title stands? Not on popular consent surely; for though the people willingly acquiesce in his authority, they never imagine that their consent makes him sovereign. They consent because they apprehend him to be already, by birth, their lawful sovereign. And as to that tacit consent, which may now be inferred from their living under his dominion, this is no more than what they formerly gave to the tyrant and usurper.

When we assert that all lawful government arises from the people, we certainly do them more honour than they deserve, or even expect and desire from us. After the Roman dominions became too unwieldy for the republic to {p185} govern, the people over the whole known world were extremely grateful to Augustus for that authority which, by violence, he had established over them; and they showed an equal disposition to submit to the successor whom he left them by his last will and testament. It was afterwards their misfortune that there never was in one family any long, regular succession; but that their line of princes was continually broke, either by private assassination or public rebellion. The prætorean bands, on the failure of every family, set up one emperor, the legions in the East a second, those in Germany perhaps a third; and the sword alone could decide the controversy. The condition of the people in that mighty monarchy was to be lamented, not because the choice of the emperor was never left to them, for that was impracticable, but because they never fell under any succession of masters, who might regularly follow each other. As to the violence and wars and bloodshed occasioned by every new settlement, those were not blameable, because they were inevitable.

The house of Lancaster ruled in this island about sixty years, yet the partisans of the white rose seemed daily to multiply in England. The present establishment has taken place during a still longer period. Have all views of right in another family been extinguished, even though scarce any man now alive had arrived at years of discretion when it was expelled, or could have consented to its dominion, or have promised it allegiance? A sufficient indication surely of the general sentiment of mankind on this head. For we blame not the partisans of the abdicated family merely on account of the long time during which they have preserved their imaginary fidelity; we blame them for adhering to a family which, we affirm, has been justly expelled, and which, from the moment the new settlement took place, had forfeited all title to authority.

But would we have a more regular, at least a more philosophical, refutation of this principle of an original contract or popular consent, perhaps the following observations may suffice. {p186}

All moral duties may be divided into two kinds. The first are those to which men are impelled by a natural instinct or immediate propensity which operates in them, independent of all ideas of obligation and of all views, either to public or private utility. Of this nature are love of children, gratitude to benefactors, pity to the unfortunate. When we reflect on the advantage which results to society from such humane instincts, we pay them the just tribute of moral approbation and esteem; but the person actuated by them feels their power and influence antecedent to any such reflection.

The second kind of moral duties are such as are not supported by any original instinct of nature, but are performed entirely from a sense of obligation, when we consider the necessities of human society and the impossibility of supporting it if these duties were neglected. It is thus justice or a regard to the property of others, fidelity or the observance of promises, become obligatory and acquire an authority over mankind. For as it is evident that every man loves himself better than any other person, he is naturally impelled to extend his acquisitions as much as possible; and nothing can restrain him in this propensity but reflection and experience, by which he learns the pernicious effects of that licence and the total dissolution of society which must ensue from it. His original inclination, therefore, or instinct, is here checked and restrained by a subsequent judgment or observation.

The case is precisely the same with the political or civil duty of allegiance as with the natural duties of justice and fidelity. Our primary instincts lead us either to indulge ourselves in unlimited liberty or to seek dominion over others; and it is this reflection only which engages us to sacrifice such strong passions to the interests of peace and order. A very small degree of experience and observation suffices to teach us that society cannot possibly be maintained without the authority of magistrates, and that this authority must soon fall into contempt where exact obedience is not paid to it. The observation of these general and {p187} obvious interests is the source of all allegiance, and of that moral obligation which we attribute to it.

What necessity, therefore, is there to found the duty of allegiance or obedience to magistrates on that of fidelity or a regard to promises, and to suppose that it is the consent of each individual which subjects him to government, when it appears that both allegiance and fidelity stand precisely on the same foundation, and are both submitted to by mankind, on account of the apparent interests and necessities of human society? We are bound to obey our sovereign, it is said, because we have given a tacit promise to that purpose. But why are we bound to observe our promise? It must here be asserted that the commerce and intercourse of mankind, which are of such mighty advantage, can have no security where men pay no regard to their engagements. In like manner may it be said that men could not live at all in society, at least in a civilized society, without laws and magistrates and judges to prevent the encroachments of the strong upon the weak, of the violent upon the just and equitable. The obligation to allegiance being of like force and authority with the obligation to fidelity, we gain nothing by resolving the one into the other. The general interests or necessities of society are sufficient to establish both.

If the reason is asked of that obedience which we are bound to pay to government, I readily answer, because society could not otherwise subsist. And this answer is clear and intelligible to all mankind. Your answer is, because we should keep our word. But besides that, nobody, till trained in a philosophical system, can either comprehend or relish this answer; besides this, I say, you find yourself embarrassed when it is asked why we are bound to keep our word, and you can give no other answer but what would immediately, without any circuit, have accounted for our obligation to allegiance.

But to whom is allegiance due? And who are our lawful sovereigns? This question is often the most difficult of any, and liable to infinite discussions. When people are so happy that they can answer, “Our present sovereign, who {p188} inherits, in a direct line, from ancestors that have governed us for many ages,” this answer admits of no reply, even though historians, in tracing up to the remotest antiquity the origin of that royal family, may find, as commonly happens, that its first authority was derived from usurpation and violence. It is confessed that private justice, or the abstinence from the properties of others, is a most cardinal virtue; yet reason tells us that there is no property in durable objects, such as lands or houses, when carefully examined in passing from hand to hand, but must in some period have been founded on fraud and injustice. The necessities of human society, neither in private nor public life, will allow of such an accurate inquiry; and there is no virtue or moral duty but what may with facility be refined away if we indulge in a false philosophy, in sifting and scrutinizing it, by every captious rule of logic, in every light or position in which it may be placed.

The questions with regard to public property have filled infinite volumes of law and philosophy, if in both we add the commentators to the original text; and in the end we may safely pronounce that many of the rules there established are uncertain, ambiguous, and arbitrary. The like opinion may be formed with regard to the successions and rights of princes and forms of government. Many cases no doubt occur, especially in the infancy of any government, which admit of no determination from the laws of justice and equity; and our historian Rapin allows that the controversy between Edward III. and Philip de Valois was of this nature, and could be decided only by an appeal to heaven—that is, by war and violence.

Who shall tell me whether Germanicus or Drusus ought to have succeeded Tiberius had he died while they were both alive without naming either of them for his successor? Ought the right of adoption to be received as equivalent to that of blood in a nation where it had the same effect in private families, and had already in two instances taken place in the public? Ought Germanicus to be esteemed the eldest son because he was born before Drusus, or the {p189} younger because he was adopted after the birth of his brother? Ought the right of the elder to be regarded in a nation where the eldest brother had no advantage in the succession of private families? Ought the Roman Empire at that time to be esteemed hereditary because of

two examples, or ought it even so early to be regarded as belonging to the stronger or present possessor as being founded on so recent a usurpation?

Commodus mounted the throne after a pretty long succession of excellent emperors, who had acquired their title, not by birth or public election, but by the fictitious rite of adoption. That bloody debauchee being murdered by a conspiracy suddenly formed between his wench and her gallant, who happened at that time to be Prætorian Prefect, these immediately deliberated about choosing a master to humankind, to speak in the style of those ages; and they cast their eyes on Pertinax. Before the tyrant's death was known the Prefect went silently to that senator, who, on the appearance of the soldiers, imagined that his execution had been ordered by Commodus. He was immediately saluted Emperor by the officer and his attendants; cheerfully proclaimed by the populace; unwillingly submitted to by the guards; formally recognised by the senate; and passively received by the provinces and armies of the Empire.

The discontent of the Prætorian bands soon broke out in a sudden sedition, which occasioned the murder of that excellent prince; and the world being now without a master and without government, the guards thought proper to set the Empire formally to sale. Julian, the purchaser, was proclaimed by the soldiers, recognized by the senate, and submitted to by the people, and must also have been submitted to by the provinces had not the envy of the legions begot opposition and resistance. Pescennius Niger in Syria elected himself Emperor, gained the tumultuary consent of his army, and was attended with the secret good-will of the senate and people of Rome. Albinus in Britain found an equal right to set up his claim; but Severus, who governed Pannonia, prevailed in the end above both of them. That able {p190} politician and warrior, finding his own birth and dignity too much inferior to the imperial crown, professed at first an intention only of revenging the death of Pertinax. He marched as general into Italy, defeated Julian, and without our being able to fix any precise commencement even of the soldiers' consent, he was from necessity acknowledged Emperor by the senate and people, and fully established in his violent authority by subduing Niger and Albinus.

“Inter hæc Gordianus Cæsar,” says Capitolinus, speaking of another period, “sublatus a militibus, Imperator, est appellatus, quia non erat alius in præsentī.” It is to be remarked that Gordian was a boy of fourteen years of age.

Frequent instances of a like nature occur in the history of the emperors; in that of Alexander's successors, and of many other countries. Nor can anything be more unhappy than a despotic government of that kind, where the succession is disjointed and irregular, and must be determined on every occasion by force or election. In a free government the matter is often unavoidable, and is also much less dangerous. The interests of liberty may there frequently lead the people in their own defence to alter the succession of the crown, and the constitution being compounded of parts, may still maintain a sufficient stability by resting on the aristocratical or democratical members, though the monarchical be altered from time to time in order to accommodate it to the former.

In an absolute government when there is no legal prince who has a title to the throne, it may safely be determined to belong to the first occupier. Instances of this kind are but too frequent, especially in the Eastern monarchies. When any race of princes expires the will or destination of the last sovereign will be regarded as a title. Thus the edict of Louis XIV., who called the bastard princes to the succession in case of the failure of all the legitimate princes, would, in such an event, have some authority.^[104] Thus the will of ^{p191} Charles II. disposed of the whole Spanish monarchy. The cession of the ancient proprietor, especially when joined to conquest, is likewise esteemed a very good title. The general bond of obligation which unites us to government is the interest and necessities of society, and this obligation is very strong. The determination of it to this or that particular prince or form of government is frequently more uncertain and dubious. Present possession has considerable authority in these cases, and greater than in private property, because of the disorders which attend all revolutions and changes of government.^[105]

We shall only observe, before we conclude, that though an appeal to general opinion may justly, in the speculative sciences of metaphysics, natural philosophy, or astronomy, be esteemed unfair and inconclusive, yet in all questions with regard to morals, as well as criticism, there is really no standard by which any controversy can ever be decided. And nothing is a clearer proof that a theory of this kind is erroneous than to find that it leads to paradoxes which are repugnant to the common sentiments of mankind and to general practice and opinion. The doctrine which founds all lawful government on an original contract, or consent of ^{p192} the people, is plainly of this kind; nor has the ablest of its partisans in prosecution of it scrupled

to affirm that absolute monarchy is inconsistent with civil society, and so can be no form of civil government at all,[106] and that the supreme power in a state cannot take from any man by taxes and impositions any part of his property without his own consent or that of his representatives.[107] What authority any moral reasoning can have which leads to opinions so wide of the general practice of mankind in every place but this single kingdom it is easy to determine.[108]

NOTES, OF THE ORIGINAL CONTRACT.

103 Henry IV. of France.

104 It is remarkable that in the remonstrance of the Duke of Bourbon and the legitimate princes against this destination of Louis XIV., the doctrine of the original contract is insisted on, even in that absolute government. The French nation, say they, choosing Hugh Capet and his posterity to rule over them and their posterity, where the former line fails, there is a tacit right reserved to choose a new royal family; and this right is invaded by calling the bastard princes to the throne without the consent of the nation. But the Comte de Boulainvilliers, who wrote in defence of the bastard princes, ridicules this notion of an original contract, especially when applied to Hugh Capet; who mounted the throne, says he, by the same arts which have ever been employed by all conquerors and usurpers. He got his title, indeed, recognized by the states after he had put himself in possession. But is this a choice or contract? The Comte de Boulainvilliers, we may observe, was a noted republican; but being a man of learning, and very conversant in history, he knew the people were never almost consulted in these revolutions and new establishments, and that time alone bestowed right and authority on what was commonly at first founded on force and violence. (See *État de la France*, vol. iii.)

105 The crime of rebellion amongst the ancients was commonly marked by the terms νεωτερίζειν, *novas res moliri*.

106 See Locke on Government, chap. 7, § 90.

107 Locke on Government, chap. 11, § 138, 139, 140.

108 The only passage I meet with in antiquity where the obligation of obedience to government is ascribed to a promise is in Plato—in *Critone*, where Socrates refuses to escape from prison, because he had tacitly promised to obey the laws. Thus he builds a Tory consequence of passive obedience on a Whig foundation of the original contract.

New discoveries are not to be expected in these matters. If no man, till very lately, ever imagined that government was founded on contract, it is certain it cannot, in general, have any such foundation.

OF PASSIVE OBEDIENCE.

In the former essay we endeavoured to refute the speculative systems of politics advanced in this nation, as well the religious system of the one party as the philosophical of the other. We come now to examine the practical consequences deduced by each party with regard to the measures of submission due to sovereigns.

As the obligation to justice is founded entirely on the interests of society, which require mutual abstinence from property, in order to preserve peace among mankind, it is evident that, when the execution of justice would be attended with very pernicious consequences, that virtue must be suspended, and give place to public utility in such {p193} extraordinary and such pressing emergencies. The maxim, *fiat Justitia, ruat Cælum* (let justice be performed though the universe be destroyed), is apparently false, and by sacrificing the end to the means shows a preposterous idea of the subordination of duties. What governor of a town makes any scruple of burning the suburbs when they facilitate the advances of the enemy? Or what general abstains from plundering a neutral country when the necessities of war require it, and he cannot otherwise maintain his army? The case is the same with the duty of allegiance; and common sense teaches us, that as government binds us to obedience only on account of its tendency to public utility, that duty must always, in extraordinary cases, when public ruin would evidently attend obedience, yield to the primary and original obligation. *Salus populi suprema Lex* (the safety of the people is the supreme law). This maxim is agreeable to the sentiments of mankind in all ages; nor is any one, when he reads of the insurrections against a Nero, or a Philip, so infatuated with party-systems as not to wish success to the enterprise and praise the undertakers. Even our high monarchical party, in spite of their sublime theory, are forced in such cases to judge and feel and approve in conformity to the rest of mankind.

Resistance, therefore, being admitted in extraordinary emergencies, the question can only be among good reasoners with regard to the degree of necessity which can justify resistance and render it lawful or commendable. And here I must confess that I shall always incline to their side who draw the bond of allegiance the closest possible, and consider an infringement of it as the last refuge in desperate cases when the public is in the highest danger from violence and tyranny; for besides the mischiefs of a civil war, which commonly attends insurrection, it is certain that where a disposition to rebellion appears among any people it is one chief cause of tyranny in the rulers, and forces them into many violent measures which they never would have embraced had every one seemed inclined to submission and obedience. It is thus the tyrannicide or ^{p194} assassination, approved of by ancient maxims, instead of keeping tyrants and usurpers in awe, made them ten times more fierce and unrelenting; and is now justly, upon that account, abolished by the laws of nations, and universally condemned as a base and treacherous method of bringing to justice these disturbers of society.

Besides, we must consider that, as obedience is our duty in the common course of things, it ought chiefly to be inculcated; nor can anything be more preposterous than an anxious care and solicitude in stating all the cases in which resistance may be allowed. Thus, though a philosopher reasonably acknowledges in the course of an argument that the rules of justice may be dispensed with in cases of urgent necessity, what should we think of a preacher or casuist who should make it his chief study to find out such cases and enforce them with all the vehemence of argument and eloquence? Would he not be better employed in inculcating the general doctrine than in displaying the particular exceptions, which we are, perhaps, but too much inclined of ourselves to embrace and extend?

There are, however, two reasons which may be pleaded in defence of that party among us who have, with so much industry, propagated the maxims of resistance—maxims which, it must be confessed, are in general so pernicious and so destructive of civil society. The first is that their antagonists carrying the doctrine of obedience to such an extravagant height as not only never to mention the exceptions in extraordinary cases (which might perhaps be excusable), but even positively to exclude them, it became necessary to insist on these exceptions, and defend the rights of injured truth and liberty. The second and perhaps better reason is founded on the nature of the British constitution and form of government.

It is almost peculiar to our constitution to establish a first magistrate with such high pre-eminence and dignity that, though limited by the laws, he is in a manner, so far as regards his own person, above the laws, and can neither be questioned nor punished for any injury or wrong which {p195} may be committed by him. His ministers alone, or those who act by his commission, are obnoxious to justice; and while the prince is thus allured by the prospect of personal safety to give the laws their free course, an equal security is in effect obtained by the punishment of lesser offenders, and at the same time a civil war is avoided, which would be the infallible consequence were an attack at every turn made directly upon the sovereign. But though the constitution pays this salutary compliment to the prince, it can never reasonably be understood by that maxim to have determined its own destruction, or to have established a tame submission where he protects his ministers, perseveres in injustice, and usurps the whole power of the commonwealth. This case, indeed, is never expressly put by the laws, because it is impossible for them in their ordinary course to provide a remedy for it, or establish any magistrate with superior authority to chastise the exorbitancies of the prince. But as a right without remedy would be the greatest of all absurdities, the remedy in this case is the extraordinary one of resistance, when affairs come to that extremity that the constitution can be defended by it alone. Resistance, therefore, must of course become more frequent in the British Government than in others which are simpler and consist of fewer parts and movements. Where the king is an absolute sovereign, he has little temptation to commit such enormous tyranny as may justly provoke rebellion; but where he is limited, his imprudent ambition, without any great vices, may run him into that perilous situation. This is commonly supposed to have been the case with Charles I., and if we may now speak truth, after animosities are laid, this was also the case with James II. These were harmless, if not, in their private character, good men; but mistaking the nature of our constitution, and engrossing the whole legislative power, it became necessary to oppose them with some vehemence, and even to deprive the latter formally of that authority which he had used with such imprudence and indiscretion.

OF THE COALITION OF PARTIES.

To abolish all distinctions of party may not be practicable, perhaps not desirable, in a free government. The only parties which are dangerous are such as entertain opposite views with regard to the essentials of government, the succession of the crown, or the more considerable privileges belonging to the several members of the constitution; where there is no room for any compromise or accommodation, and where the controversy may appear so momentous as to justify even an opposition by arms to the pretensions of antagonists. Of this nature was the animosity continued for above a century between the parties in England—an animosity which broke out sometimes into civil war, which occasioned violent revolutions, and which continually endangered the peace and tranquillity of the nation. But as there has appeared of late the strongest symptoms of a universal desire to abolish these party distinctions, this tendency to a coalition affords the most agreeable prospect of future happiness, and ought to be carefully cherished and promoted by every lover of his country.

There is not a more effectual method of promoting so good an end than to prevent all unreasonable insult and triumph of the one party over the other, to encourage moderate opinions, to find the proper medium in all disputes, to persuade each that its antagonist may possibly be sometimes in the right, and to keep a balance in the praise and blame which we bestow on either side. The two former essays, concerning the original contract and passive obedience, are calculated for this purpose with regard to the philosophical controversies between the parties, and tend to show that neither side are in these respects so fully supported by reason as they endeavour to flatter themselves. We shall proceed to exercise the same moderation with regard to the historical disputes, by proving that each party was justified by plausible topics, that there {p197} were on both sides wise men who meant well to their country, and that the past animosity between

the factions had no better foundation than narrow prejudice or interested passion.

The popular party, who afterwards acquired the name of Whigs, might justify by very specious arguments that opposition to the crown, from which our present free constitution is derived. Though obliged to acknowledge that precedents in favour of prerogative had uniformly taken place during many reigns before Charles I., they thought that there was no reason for submitting any longer to so dangerous an authority. Such might have been their reasoning. The rights of mankind are so sacred that no prescription of tyranny or arbitrary power can have authority sufficient to abolish them. Liberty is the most inestimable of all blessings, and wherever there appears any probability of recovering it, a nation may willingly run many hazards, and ought not even to repine at the greatest effusion of blood or dissipation of treasure. All human institutions, and none more than government, are in continual fluctuation. Kings are sure to embrace every opportunity of extending their prerogatives, and if favourable incidents be not also laid hold of to extend and secure the privileges of the people, a universal despotism must for ever prevail among mankind. The example of all the neighbouring nations proves that it is no longer safe to entrust with the crown the same exorbitant prerogatives which had formerly been exercised during rude and simple ages. And though the example of many late reigns may be pleaded in favour of a power in the prince somewhat arbitrary, more remote reigns afford instances of stricter limitations imposed on the crown, and those pretensions of the Parliament, now branded with the title of innovations, are only a recovery of the just rights of the people.

These views, far from being odious, are surely large and generous and noble. To their prevalence and success the kingdom owes its liberty, perhaps its learning, its industry, commerce, and naval power. By them chiefly the English {p198} name is distinguished among the society of nations, and aspires to a rivalship with that of the freest and most illustrious commonwealths of antiquity. But as all these mighty consequences could not reasonably be foreseen at the time when the contest began, the royalists of that age wanted not specious arguments on their side, by which they could justify their defence of the then established prerogatives of the crown. We shall state the question, as it might appear to them at the assembling of that Parliament, which by their violent encroachments on the crown, began the civil wars.

The only rule of government, they might have said, known and acknowledged among men, is use and practice. Reason is so uncertain a guide that it will always be exposed to doubt and controversy. Could it ever render itself prevalent over the people, men had always retained it as their sole rule of conduct; they had still continued in the primitive, unconnected state of nature, without submitting to political government, whose sole basis is not pure reason, but authority and precedent. Dissolve these ties, you break all the bonds of civil society, and leave every man at liberty to consult his particular interest, by those expedients which his appetite, disguised under the appearance of reason, shall dictate to him. The spirit of innovation is in itself pernicious, however favourable its particular object may sometimes appear. A truth so obvious that the popular party themselves are sensible of it, and therefore cover their encroachments on the crown by the plausible pretence of their recovering the ancient liberties of the people.

But the present prerogatives of the crown, allowing all the suppositions of that party, have been incontestably established ever since the accession of the house of Tudor, a period which, as it now comprehends a hundred and sixty years, may be allowed sufficient to give stability to any constitution. Would it not have appeared ridiculous in the reign of the Emperor Adrian to talk of the constitution of the republic as the rule of government, or to suppose {p199} that the former rights of the senate and consuls and tribunes were still subsisting?

But the present claims of the English monarchs are infinitely more favourable than those of the Roman emperors during that age. The authority of Augustus was a plain usurpation, grounded only on military violence, and forms such an era in the Roman history as is obvious to every reader. But if Henry VII. really, as some pretend, enlarged the power of the crown, it was only by insensible acquisitions which escaped the apprehension of the people, and have scarcely been remarked even by historians and politicians. The new government, if it deserves the name, is an imperceptible transition from the former; is entirely engrafted on it; derives its title fully from that root; and is to be considered only as one of those gradual revolutions to which human affairs in every nation will be for ever subject.

The House of Tudor, and after them that of Stuart, exercised no prerogatives, but what had been claimed and exercised by the Plantagenets.

Not a single branch of their authority can be said to be altogether an innovation. The only difference is that perhaps the more ancient kings exerted these powers only by intervals, and were not able, by reason of the opposition of their barons, to render them so steady a rule of administration. [109] But the sole inference from this fact is that those times were more turbulent and seditious, and that the laws have happily of late gained the ascendant.

Under what pretence can the popular party now talk of recovering the ancient constitution? The former control ^{p200} over the kings was not placed in the commons, but in the barons. The people had no authority, and even little or no liberty, till the crown, by suppressing these factious tyrants, enforced the execution of the laws, and obliged all the subjects equally to respect each other's rights, privileges, and properties. If we must return to the ancient barbarous and Gothic constitution, let those gentlemen, who now behave themselves with so much insolence to their sovereign, set the first example. Let them make court to be admitted as retainers to a neighbouring baron, and by submitting to slavery under him, acquire some protection to themselves, together with the power of exercising rapine and oppression over their inferior slaves and villains. This was the condition of the commons among their remote ancestors.

But how far back shall we go, in having recourse to ancient constitutions and governments? There was a constitution still more ancient than that to which these innovators affect so much to appeal. During that period there was no Magna Charta. The barons themselves possessed few regular, stated privileges, and the House of Commons probably had not an existence.

It is pleasant to hear a house, while they are usurping the whole power of the government, talk of reviving ancient institutions. Is it not known that, though the representatives received wages from their constituents, to be a member of their house was always considered as a burden, and a freedom from it as a privilege? Will they persuade us that power, which of all human acquisitions is the most coveted, and in comparison of which even reputation and pleasure and riches are slighted, could ever be regarded as a burden by any man?

The property acquired of late by the commons, it is said, entitles them to more power than their ancestors enjoyed. But to what is this increase of their property owing, but to an increase of their liberty and their security?

Let them therefore acknowledge that their ancestors, while the crown was restrained by the seditious barons, really {p201} enjoyed less liberty than they themselves have attained, after the sovereign acquired the ascendant, and let them enjoy that liberty with moderation, and not forfeit it by new exorbitant claims, and by rendering it a pretence for endless innovations.

The true rule of government is the present established practice of the age. That has most authority, because it is recent. It is also better known for the same reason. Who has assured those tribunes that the Plantagenets did not exercise as high acts of authority as the Tudors? The historians, they say, do not mention them; but the historians are also silent with regard to the chief exertions of prerogative by the Tudors. Where any power or prerogative is fully and undoubtedly established, the exercise of it passes for a thing of course, and readily escapes the notice of history and annals. Had we no other monuments of Elizabeth's reign than what are preserved even by Camden, the most copious, judicious, and exact of our historians, we should be entirely ignorant of the most important maxims of her government.

Was not the present monarchical government to its full extent authorized by lawyers, recommended by divines, acknowledged by politicians, acquiesced in—nay, passionately cherished—by the people in general; and all this during a period of at least a hundred and sixty years, and till of late, without the least murmur or controversy? This general consent surely, during so long a time, must be sufficient to render a constitution legal and valid. If the origin of all power be derived, as is pretended, from the people, here is their consent in the fullest and most ample terms that can be desired or imagined.

But the people must not pretend, because they can, by their consent, lay the foundations of government, that therefore they are to be permitted, at their pleasure, to overthrow and subvert them. There is no end of these seditious and arrogant claims. The power of the crown is now openly struck at; the nobility are also in visible peril; the gentry will soon follow; the popular leaders, who will {p202} then assume the name of gentry, will next be exposed to danger; and the people themselves, having become incapable of civil government, and lying under the restraint of no authority, must, for the sake of peace, admit, instead of their legal and mild monarchs, a succession of military and despotic tyrants.

These consequences are the more to be dreaded, as the present fury of the people, though glossed over by pretensions to civil liberty, is in reality incited by the fanaticism of religion, a principle the most blind, headstrong, and ungovernable by which human nature can ever possibly be actuated. Popular rage is dreadful, from whatever motive derived, but must be attended with the most pernicious consequences when it arises from a principle which disclaims all control by human law, reason, or authority.

These are the arguments which each party may make use of to justify the conduct of their predecessors during that great crisis. The event has shown that the reasonings of the popular party were better founded; but perhaps, according to the established maxims of lawyers and politicians, the views of the royalists ought beforehand to have appeared more solid, more safe, and more legal. But this is certain, that the greater moderation we now employ in representing past events, the nearer we shall be to produce a full coalition of the parties and an entire acquiescence in our present happy establishment. Moderation is of advantage to every establishment; nothing but zeal can overturn a settled power, and an over-active zeal in friends is apt to beget a like spirit in antagonists. The transition from a moderate opposition against an establishment to an entire acquiescence in it is easy and insensible.

There are many invincible arguments which should induce the malcontent party to acquiesce entirely in the present settlement of the constitution. They now find that the spirit of civil liberty, though at first connected with religious fanaticism, could purge itself from that pollution, and appear under a more genuine and engaging aspect—a friend to toleration, and an encourager of all the enlarged and {p203} generous sentiments that do honour to human nature. They may observe that the popular claims could stop at a proper period, and after retrenching the exorbitant prerogatives of the crown, could still maintain a due respect to monarchy, to nobility, and to all ancient institutions. Above all, they must be sensible that the very principle which made the strength of their party, and from which it derived its chief authority, has now deserted them and gone over to their antagonists. The plan of liberty is settled, its happy effects are proved by experience, a long tract of time has given it stability, and whoever would attempt to overturn it, and to recall the past government or abdicated family, would, besides other more criminal imputations, be exposed in their turn to the reproach of faction and innovation. While they

peruse the history of past events, they ought to reflect, both that the rights of the crown are long since annihilated, and that the tyranny and violence and oppression to which they often gave rise are ills from which the established liberty of the constitution has now at last happily protected the people. These reflections will prove a better security to our freedom and privileges than to deny, contrary to the clearest evidence of facts, that such regal powers ever had any existence. There is not a more effectual method of betraying a cause than to lay the strength of the argument on a wrong place, and by disputing an untenable post inure the adversaries to success and victory.

NOTE, OF THE COALITION OF PARTIES.

109 The author believes that he was the first writer who advanced that the family of Tudor possessed in general more authority than their immediate predecessors—an opinion which, he hopes, will be supported by history, but which he proposes with some diffidence. There are strong symptoms of arbitrary power in some former reigns, even after signing of the charters. The power of the crown in that age depended less on the constitution than on the capacity and vigour of the prince who wore it.

OF THE PROTESTANT SUCCESSION.

I suppose that a member of Parliament in the reign of King William or Queen Anne, while the establishment of the Protestant Succession was yet uncertain, were deliberating concerning the party he would choose in that important question, and weighing with impartiality the advantages and ^{p204}disadvantages on each side. I believe the following particulars would have entered into his consideration.

He would easily perceive the great advantages resulting from the restoration of the Stuart family, by which we should preserve the succession clear and undisputed, free from a pretender, with such a specious title as that of blood, which with the multitude is always the claim the strongest and most easily comprehended. It is in vain to say, as many have done, that the question with regard to governors, independent of government, is frivolous and little worth disputing, much less fighting about. The generality of mankind never will enter into these sentiments; and it is much happier, I believe, for society that they do not, but rather continue in their natural prejudices and prepossessions. How could stability be preserved in any monarchical government (which, though perhaps not the best, is, and always has been, the most common of any) unless men had so passionate a regard for the true heir of their royal family, and even though he be weak in understanding, or infirm in years, gave him so great a preference above persons the most accomplished in shining talents or celebrated for great achievements? Would not every popular leader put in his claim at every vacancy, or even without any vacancy, and the kingdom become the theatre of perpetual wars and convulsions? The condition of the Roman Empire surely was not in this respect much to be envied, nor is that of the Eastern nations, who pay little regard to the title of their sovereigns, but sacrifice them every day to the caprice or momentary humour of the populace or soldiery. It is but a foolish wisdom which is so carefully displayed in undervaluing princes and placing them on a level with the meanest of mankind.

To be sure, an anatomist finds no more in the greatest monarch than in the lowest peasant or day-labourer, and a moralist may perhaps frequently find less. But what do all these reflections tend to? We all of us still retain these prejudices in favour of birth and family, and neither in our serious occupations nor most careless amusements can we ever get entirely rid of them. A tragedy that should {p205} represent the adventures of sailors or porters, or even of private gentlemen, would presently disgust us; but one that introduces kings and princes acquires in our eyes an air of importance and dignity. Or should a man be able, by his superior wisdom, to get entirely above such prepossessions, he would soon, by means of the same wisdom, again bring himself down to them for the sake of society, whose welfare he would perceive to be intimately connected with them. Far from endeavouring to undeceive the people in this particular, he would cherish such sentiments of reverence to their princes as requisite to preserve a due subordination in society. And though the lives of twenty thousand men be often sacrificed to maintain a king in possession of his throne, or preserve the right of succession undisturbed, he entertains no indignation at the loss on pretence that every individual was perhaps in himself as valuable as the prince he served. He considers the consequences of violating the hereditary right of kings—consequences which may be felt for many centuries; while the loss of several thousand men brings so little prejudice to a large kingdom that it may not be perceived a few years afterwards.

The advantages of the Hanover succession are of an opposite nature, and arise from this very circumstance, that it violates hereditary right, and places on the throne a prince to whom birth gave no title to that dignity. It is evident to any one who considers the history of this island that the privileges of the people have during the last two centuries been continually upon the increase, by the division of the church-lands, by the alienations of the barons' estates, by the progress of trade, and above all by the happiness of our situation, which for a long time gave us sufficient security without any standing army or military establishment. On the contrary, public liberty has, almost in every other nation of Europe, been during the same period extremely upon the decline, while the people were disgusted at the hardships of the old feudal militia, and chose rather to entrust their prince with mercenary armies, which he easily turned against themselves. It was nothing extraordinary, therefore, that {p206} some of our British sovereigns mistook the nature of the constitution and genius of the people; and as they

embraced all the favourable precedents left them by their ancestors, they overlooked all those which were contrary, and which supposed a limitation in our government. They were encouraged in this mistake by the example of all the neighbouring princes, who, bearing the same title or appellation, and being adorned with the same ensigns of authority, naturally led them to claim the same powers and prerogatives.^[110] The flattery of courtiers further blinded them, and ^{p207} above all that of the clergy, who from several passages of Scripture, and these wrested too, had erected a regular and avowed system of tyranny and despotic power. The only method of destroying at once all these exorbitant claims and pretensions was to depart from the true hereditary line, and choose a prince who, being plainly a creature of the public, and receiving the crown on conditions, expressed and avowed, found his authority established on the same bottom with the privileges of the people. By electing him in the royal line we cut off all hopes of ambitious subjects who might in future emergencies disturb the government by their cabals and pretensions; by rendering the crown hereditary in his family we avoided all the inconveniences of elective monarchy; and by excluding the lineal heir we secured all our constitutional limitations, and rendered our government uniform and of a piece. The people cherish monarchy because protected by it, the monarch favours liberty because created by it. And thus every advantage is obtained by the new establishment, as far as human skill and wisdom can extend itself.

These are the separate advantages of fixing the succession, either in the house of Stuart or in that of Hanover. There are also disadvantages on each establishment, which an impartial patriot would ponder and examine, in order to form a just judgment upon the whole.

The disadvantages of the Protestant Succession consist in the foreign dominions which are possessed by the princes of the Hanover line, and which it might be supposed would engage us in the intrigues and wars of the Continent, and lose us in some measure the inestimable advantage we possess of being surrounded and guarded by the sea which we command. The disadvantages of recalling the abdicated ^{p208} family consist chiefly in their religion, which is more prejudicial to society than that established among us is contrary to it, and affords no toleration, or peace, or security to any other religion.

It appears to me that all these advantages and disadvantages are allowed on both sides; at least, by every one who is at all susceptible of argument or

reasoning. No subject, however loyal, pretends to deny that the disputed title and foreign dominions of the present royal family are a loss; nor is there any partisan of the Stuart family but will confess that the claim of hereditary, indefeasible right, and the Roman Catholic religion, are also disadvantages in that family. It belongs, therefore, to a philosopher alone, who is of neither party, to put all these circumstances in the scale and to assign to each of them its proper poise and influence. Such a one will readily, at first, acknowledge that all political questions are infinitely complicated, and that there scarce ever occurs in any deliberation a choice which is either purely good or purely ill. Consequences, mixed and varied, may be foreseen to flow from every measure—and many consequences unforeseen do always, in fact, result from it. Hesitation, and reserve, and suspense are therefore the only sentiment he brings to this essay or trial; or if he indulges any passion it is that of derision and ridicule against the ignorant multitude, who are always clamorous and dogmatical even in the nicest questions, of which, from want of temper, perhaps still more than of understanding, they are altogether unfit judges.

But to say something more determinate on this head, the following reflections will, I hope, show the temper, if not the understanding of a philosopher.

Were we to judge merely by first appearances and by past experience, we must allow that the advantages of a parliamentary title of the house of Hanover are much greater than those of an undisputed hereditary title in the house of Stuart, and that our fathers acted wisely in preferring the former to the latter. So long as the house of Stuart reigned in Britain, which, with some interruption, {p209} was above eighty years, the government was kept in a continual fever by the contentions between the privileges of the people and the prerogatives of the crown. If arms were dropped, the noise of disputes continued; or, if these were silenced, jealousy still corroded the heart, and threw the nation into an unnatural ferment and disorder. And while we were thus occupied in domestic contentions, a foreign power, dangerous, if not fatal, to public liberty, erected itself in Europe without any opposition from us, and even sometimes with our assistance.

But during these last sixty years, when a parliamentary establishment has taken place, whatever factions may have prevailed either among the people or in public assemblies, the whole force of our constitution has always fallen to one side, and an uninterrupted harmony has been preserved

between our princes and our parliaments. Public liberty, with internal peace and order, has flourished almost without interruption; trade and manufactures and agriculture have increased; the arts and sciences and philosophy have been cultivated. Even religious parties have been necessitated to lay aside their mutual rancour, and the glory of the nation has spread itself all over Europe; while we stand the bulwark against oppression, and the great antagonist of that power which threatens every people with conquest and subjection. So long and so glorious a period no nation almost can boast of; nor is there another instance in the whole history of mankind that so many millions of people have during such a space of time been held together in a manner so free, so rational, and so suitable to the dignity of human nature.

But though this recent instance seems clearly to decide in favour of the present establishment, there are some circumstances to be thrown into the other scale, and it is dangerous to regulate our judgment by one event or example.

We have had two rebellions during the flourishing period above mentioned, besides plots and conspiracies without number; and, if none of these have produced any very fatal {p210} event, we may ascribe our escape chiefly to the narrow genius of those princes who disputed our establishment, and may esteem ourselves so far fortunate. But the claims of the banished family, I fear, are not yet antiquated, and who can foretell that their future attempts will produce no greater disorder?

The disputes between privilege and prerogative may easily be composed by laws, and votes, and conferences, and concessions, where there is tolerable temper or prudence on both sides, or on either side. Among contending titles the question can only be determined by the sword, and by devastation, and by civil war.

A prince who fills the throne with a disputed title dares not arm his subjects, the only method of securing a people fully, both against domestic oppression and foreign conquest.

Notwithstanding all our riches and renown, what a critical escape did we lately make from dangers, which were owing, not so much to bad conduct and ill success in war, as to the pernicious practice of mortgaging our finances, and the still more pernicious maxim of never paying off our encumbrances? Such fatal measures could never have been embraced had it not been to secure a precarious establishment.[\[111\]](#)

But to convince us that an hereditary title is to be embraced rather than a parliamentary one, which is not supported by any other views or motives, a man needs only transport himself back to the era of the Restoration, and suppose that he had had a seat in that Parliament which recalled the royal family, and put a period to the greatest disorders that ever arose from the opposite pretensions of prince and people. What would have been thought of one that had proposed at that time to set aside Charles II. and settle the crown on the Duke of York or Gloucester, merely in order to exclude all high claims like those of their father and grandfather? Would not such a one have ^{p211} been regarded as a very extravagant projector, who loved dangerous remedies, and could tamper and play with a government and national constitution like a quack with a sickly patient?

The advantages which result from a parliamentary title, preferably to an hereditary one, though they are great, are too refined ever to enter into the conception of the vulgar. The bulk of mankind would never allow them to be sufficient for committing what would be regarded as an injustice to the prince. They must be supported by some gross, popular, and familiar topics; and wise men, though convinced of their force, would reject them in compliance with the weakness and prejudices of the people. An encroaching tyrant or deluded bigot alone, by his misconduct, is able to enrage the nation and render practicable what was always perhaps desirable.

In reality, the reason assigned by the nation for excluding the race of Stuart, and so many other branches of the royal family, is not on account of their hereditary title (which, however just in itself, would, to vulgar apprehensions, have appeared altogether absurd), but on account of their religion, which leads us to compare the disadvantages above mentioned of each establishment.

I confess that, considering the matter in general, it were much to be wished that our prince had no foreign dominions, and could confine all his attention to the government of this island. For, not to mention some real inconveniences that may result from territories on the Continent, they afford such a handle for calumny and defamation as is greedily seized by the people, who are always disposed to think ill of their superiors. It must, however, be acknowledged that Hanover is perhaps the spot of ground in Europe the least inconvenient for a King of Britain. It lies in the heart of Germany, at a distance from the Great Powers which are our natural rivals; it is protected by the laws of the Empire as well as by the arms of its own

sovereign, and it serves only to connect us more closely with the house of Austria, which is our natural ally. {p212}

In the last war it has been of service to us, by furnishing us with a considerable body of auxiliary troops, the bravest and most faithful in the world. The Elector of Hanover is the only considerable prince in the Empire who has pursued no separate end, and has raised up no stale pretensions during the late commotions of Europe, but has acted all along with the dignity of a King of Britain. And ever since the accession of that family it would be difficult to show any harm we have ever received from the electoral dominions, except that short disgust in 1718, with Charles XII., who, regulating himself by maxims very different from those of other princes, made a personal quarrel of every public injury.[112]

The religious persuasion of the house of Stuart is an inconvenience of a much deeper dye, and would threaten us with much more dismal consequences. The Roman Catholic religion, with its huge train of priests and friars, is vastly more expensive than ours. Even though unaccompanied with its natural attendants of inquisitors, and stakes, and gibbets, it is less tolerating; and not contented with dividing the sacerdotal from the regal office (which must be prejudicial to any state), it bestows the former on a foreigner, who has always a separate, and may often have an opposite interest to that of the public.

But were this religion ever so advantageous to society, it is contrary to that which is established among us, and which is likely to keep possession for a long time of the minds of the people; and though it is much to be hoped that the progress of reason and philosophy will, by degrees, abate the virulent acrimony of opposite religions all over Europe, yet the spirit of moderation has as yet made too slow advances to be entirely trusted. The conduct of the Saxon family, where the same person can be a Catholic King and Protestant Elector, is perhaps the first instance in modern times of so reasonable and prudent a behaviour. And the gradual progress of the Catholic superstition does, {p213} even there, prognosticate a speedy alteration; after which it is justly to be apprehended that the persecutions will put a speedy period to the Protestant religion in the place of its nativity.

Thus, upon the whole, the advantages of the settlement in the family of Stuart, which frees us from a disputed title, seem to bear some proportion with those of the settlement in the family of Hanover, which frees us from the claims of prerogative; but at the same time its disadvantages, by placing

on the throne a Roman Catholic, are much greater than those of the other establishment, in settling the crown on a foreign prince. What party an impartial patriot, in the reign of King William or Queen Anne, would have chosen amidst these opposite views may perhaps to some appear hard to determine. For my part, I esteem liberty so invaluable a blessing in society, that whatever favours its progress and security can scarce be too fondly cherished by every one who is a lover of humankind.

But the settlement in the house of Hanover has actually taken place. The princes of that family, without intrigue, without cabal, without solicitation on their part, have been called to mount our throne by the united voice of the whole legislative body. They have, since their accession, displayed in all their actions the utmost mildness, equity, and regard to the laws and constitution. Our own ministers, our own parliaments, ourselves have governed us, and if aught ill has befallen us we can only blame fortune or ourselves. What a reproach must we become among nations if, disgusted with a settlement so deliberately made, and whose conditions have been so religiously observed, we should throw everything again into confusion, and by our levity and rebellious disposition prove ourselves totally unfit for any state but that of absolute slavery and subjection?

The greatest inconvenience attending a disputed title is that it brings us in danger of civil wars and rebellions. What wise man, to avoid this inconvenience, would run directly upon a civil war and rebellion? Not to mention that so long possession, secured by so many laws, must ere ^{p214} this time, in the apprehension of a great part of the nation, have begot a title in the house of Hanover independent of their present possession, so that now we should not, even by a revolution, obtain the end of avoiding a disputed title.

No revolution made by national forces will ever be able, without some other great necessity, to abolish our debts and encumbrances, in which the interest of so many persons is concerned. And a revolution made by foreign forces is a conquest—a calamity with which the precarious balance of power threatens us, and which our civil dissensions are likely, above all other circumstances, to bring upon us.

NOTES, OF THE PROTESTANT SUCCESSION.

110 It appears from the speeches and proclamations and whole train of King James I.'s actions, as well as his son's, that they considered the English government as a simple monarchy, and never imagined that any considerable part of their subjects entertained a contrary idea. This made them discover their pretensions without preparing any force to support them, and even without reserve or disguise, which are always employed by those who enter upon any new project, or endeavour to innovate in any government. King James told his Parliament plainly, when they meddled in State affairs, "Ne sutor ultra crepidam." He used also at his table, in promiscuous companies, to advance his notions in a manner still more undignified, as we may learn from a story told in the life of Mr. Waller, and which that poet used frequently to repeat. When Mr. Waller was young, he had the curiosity to go to court; and he stood in the circle and saw King James dine where, amongst other company, there sat at table two bishops. The King, openly and aloud, proposed this question: "Whether he might not take his subjects' money, when he had occasion for it, without all this formality of Parliament?" The one bishop readily replied, "God forbid you should not, for you are the breath of our nostrils." The other bishop declined answering, and said he was not skilled in Parliamentary cases; but upon the King's urging him, and saying he would admit of no evasion, his lordship replied very pleasantly, "Why, then, I think your Majesty may lawfully take my brother's money, for he offers it." In Sir Walter Raleigh's preface to the *History of the World* there is this remarkable passage: "Philip II., by strong hand and main force, attempted to make himself not only an absolute monarch over the Netherlands, like unto the kings and sovereigns of England and France, but, Turk-like, to tread under his feet all their natural and fundamental laws, privileges and ancient rights." Spenser, speaking of some grants of the English kings to the Irish corporations, says: "All which, though at the time of their first grant they were tolerable, and perhaps reasonable, yet now are most unreasonable and inconvenient. But all these will easily be cut off with the superior power of her Majesty's prerogative, against which her own grants are not to be pleaded or enforced." (*State of Ireland*, p. 1537, edit. 1706.)

As these were very common, if not perhaps the universal notions of the times, the two first princes of the house of Stuart were the more excusable for their mistake. And Rapin, suitable to his usual malignity and partiality, seems to treat them with too much severity upon account of it.

111 Those who consider how universal this pernicious practice of funding has become all over Europe may perhaps dispute this last opinion, but we lay under less necessity than other States.

112 This was published in the year 1752.

IDEA OF A PERFECT COMMONWEALTH.

Of all mankind there are none so pernicious as political projectors, if they have power, nor so ridiculous if they want it; as, on the other hand, a wise politician is the most beneficial character in nature if accompanied with authority; and the most innocent, and not altogether useless, even if deprived of it. It is not with forms of government as with other artificial contrivances, where an old engine may be rejected, if we can discover another more accurate and commodious, or where trials may safely be made, even though the success be doubtful. An established government has an infinite advantage, by that very circumstance of its being established; the bulk of mankind being governed by authority, not reason, and never attributing authority to anything that has not the recommendation of antiquity. To tamper, therefore, in this affair, or try projects merely upon the credit of supposed argument and philosophy, can never be the part of a wise magistrate, who will bear a reverence to what carries the marks of age; and though he may attempt some improvements for the public good, yet will he adjust his innovations as much as possible ^{p215} to the ancient fabric, and preserve entire the chief pillars and supports of the constitution.

The mathematicians in Europe have been much divided concerning that figure of a ship which is the most commodious for sailing; and Huygens, who at last determined this controversy, is justly thought to have obliged the learned, as well as commercial world; though Columbus had sailed to America, and Sir Francis Drake made the tour of the world, without any such discovery. As one form of government must be allowed more perfect than another, independent of the manners and humours of particular men, why may we not inquire what is the most perfect of all, though the common botched and inaccurate governments seem to serve the purposes of society, and though it be not so easy to establish a new government as to build a vessel upon a new plan? The subject is surely the most worthy curiosity of

any the wit of man can possibly devise. And who knows, if this controversy were fixed by the universal consent of the learned, but in some future age an opportunity might be afforded of reducing the theory to practice, either by a dissolution of the old governments, or the combination of men to form a new one in some distant part of the world? In all cases it must be advantageous to know what is most perfect in the kind, that we may be able to bring any real constitution or form of government as near it as possible, by such gentle alterations and innovations as may not give too great disturbance to society.

All I pretend to in the present essay is to revive this subject of speculation, and therefore I shall deliver my sentiments in as few words as possible. A long dissertation on that head would not, I apprehend, be very acceptable to the public, who will be apt to regard such disquisitions both as useless and chimerical.

All plans of government which suppose great reformation in the manners of mankind are plainly imaginary. Of this nature are the *Republic* of Plato and the *Utopia* of Sir Thomas More. The *Oceana* is the only valuable model of a commonwealth that has as yet been offered to the public. {p216}

The chief defects of the *Oceana* seem to be these—First, its rotation is inconvenient, by throwing men, of whatever ability, by intervals, out of public employments. Secondly, its Agrarian is impracticable. Men will soon learn the art, which was practised in ancient Rome, of concealing their possessions under other people's names, till at last the abuse will become so common, that they will throw off even the appearance of restraint. Thirdly, the *Oceana* provides not a sufficient security for liberty, or the redress of grievances. The senate must propose, and the people consent; by which means the senate have not only a negative upon the people, but, what is of infinitely greater consequence, their negative goes before the votes of the people. Were the king's negative of the same nature in the English constitution, and could he prevent any bill from coming into Parliament, he would be an absolute monarch. As his negative follows the votes of the Houses, it is of little consequence; such a difference is there in the manner of placing the same thing. When a popular bill has been debated in the two Houses, is brought to maturity, all its conveniences and inconveniences weighed and balanced, if afterwards it be presented for the Royal assent, few princes will venture to reject the unanimous desire of the people. But

could the king crush a disagreeable bill in embryo (as was the case, for some time, in the Scots Parliament, by means of the Lords of the Articles) the British Government would have no balance, nor would grievances ever be redressed. And it is certain that exorbitant power proceeds not, in any government, from new laws so much as from neglecting to remedy the abuses which frequently rise from the old ones. A government, says Machiavel, must often be brought back to its original principles. It appears then, that in the *Oceana* the whole legislature may be said to rest in the senate; which Harrington would own to be an inconvenient form of government, especially after the Agrarian is abolished.

Here is a form of government to which I cannot, in theory, discover any considerable objection, {p217}

Let Great Britain and Ireland, or any territory of equal extent, be divided into a hundred counties, and each county into a hundred parishes, making in all ten thousand. If the country purposed to be erected into a commonwealth be of more narrow extent, we may diminish the number of counties; but never bring them below thirty. If it be of greater extent, it were better to enlarge the parishes, or throw more parishes into a county, than increase the number of counties.

Let all the freeholders of ten pounds a year in the country, and all the householders worth two hundred pounds in the town parishes, meet annually in the parish church, and choose, by ballot, some freeholder of the county for their member, whom we shall call the county representative.

Let the hundred county representatives, two days after their election, meet in the county-town, and choose by ballot, from their own body, ten county magistrates and one senator. There are, therefore, in the whole commonwealth, one hundred senators, eleven hundred county magistrates, and ten thousand county representatives; for we shall bestow on all senators the authority of county magistrates, and on all county magistrates the authority of county representatives.

Let the senators meet in the capital, and be endowed with the whole executive power of the commonwealth; the power of peace and war, of giving orders to generals, admirals, and ambassadors, and, in short, all the prerogatives of a British king, except his negative.

Let the county representatives meet in their particular counties, and possess the whole legislative power of the commonwealth; the greatest

number of counties deciding the question; and where these are equal, let the senate have the casting vote.

Every new law must first be debated in the senate; and though rejected by it, if ten senators insist and protest, it must be sent down to the counties. The senate may join to the copy of the law their reasons for receiving or rejecting it. {p218}

Because it would be troublesome to assemble all the county representatives for every trivial law that may be requisite, the senate have their choice of sending down the law either to the county magistrates or county representatives.

The magistrates, though the law be referred to them, may, if they please, call the representatives, and submit the affair to their determination.

Whether the law be referred by the senate to the county magistrates or representatives, a copy of it, and of the senate's reasons, must be sent to every representative eight days before the day appointed for the assembling, in order to deliberate concerning it. And though the determination be, by the senate, referred to the magistrates, if five representatives of the county order the magistrates to assemble the whole court of representatives, and submit the affair to their determination, they must obey.

Either the county magistrates or representatives may give to the senator of the county the copy of a law to be proposed to the senate; and if five counties concur in the same order, the law, though refused by the senate, must come either to the county magistrates or representatives, as is contained in the order of the five counties.

Any twenty counties, by a vote either of their magistrates or representatives, may throw any man out of all public offices for a year. Thirty counties for three years.

The senate has a power of throwing out any member or number of members of its own body, not to be re-elected for that year. The senate cannot throw out twice in a year the senator of the same county.

The power of the old senate continues for three weeks after the annual election of the county representatives. Then all the new senators are shut up in a conclave, like the cardinals, and by an intricate ballot, such as that of Venice or Malta, they choose the following magistrates:—A protector, who represents the dignity of the commonwealth and presides in the senate, two secretaries of state, these six councils: a council of state, a council of religion and {p219} learning, a council of trade, a council of laws, a council of

war, a council of the admiralty, each council consisting of five persons; together with six commissioners of the treasury and a first commissioner. All these must be senators. The senate also names all the ambassadors to foreign courts, who may either be senators or not.

The senate may continue any or all of these, but must re-elect them every year.

The protector and two secretaries have session and suffrage in the council of state. The business of that council is all foreign politics. The council of state has session and suffrage in all the other councils.

The council of religion and learning inspects the universities and clergy. That of trade inspects everything that may affect commerce. That of laws inspects all the abuses of laws by the inferior magistrates, and examines what improvements may be made of the municipal law. That of war inspects the militia and its discipline, magazines, stores, etc., and when the republic is in war, examines into the proper orders for generals. The council of admiralty has the same power with regard to the navy, together with the nomination of the captains and all inferior officers.

None of these councils can give orders themselves, except where they receive such powers from the senate. In other cases, they must communicate everything to the senate.

When the senate is under adjournment, any of the councils may assemble it before the day appointed for its meeting.

Besides these councils or courts, there is another called the court of competitors, which is thus constituted:—If any candidates for the office of senator have more votes than a third of the representatives, that candidate who has most votes next to the senator elected, becomes incapable for one year of all public offices, even of being a magistrate or representative; but he takes his seat in the court of competitors. Here then is a court which may sometimes consist of a hundred members, sometimes have no members at all, and by that means be for a year abolished. {p220}

The court of competitors has no power in the commonwealth. It has only the inspection of the public accounts and the accusing any man before the senate. If the senate acquit him, the court of competitors may, if they please, appeal to the people, either magistrates or representatives. Upon that appeal the magistrates or representatives meet at the day appointed by the court of competitors, and choose in each county three persons, from which

number every senator is excluded. These to the number of three hundred meet in the capital, and bring the person accused to a new trial.

The court of competitors may propose any law to the senate, and if refused, may appeal to the people—that is to the magistrates or representatives, who examine it in their counties. Every senator who is thrown out of the senate by a vote of the court, takes his seat in the court of competitors.

The senate possesses all the judicative authority of the House of Lords—that is, all the appeals from the inferior courts. It likewise nominates the Lord Chancellor and all the officers of the law.

Every county is a kind of republic within itself, and the representatives may make county-laws, which have no authority until three months after they are voted. A copy of the law is sent to the senate and to every other county. The senate or any single county may at any time annul any law of another county.

The representatives have all the authority of the British justices of peace in trials, commitments, etc.

The magistrates have the nomination of all the officers of the revenue in each county. All causes with regard to the revenue are appealed ultimately to the magistrates. They pass the accounts of all the officers, but must have all their own accounts examined and passed at the end of the year by the representatives.

The magistrates name rectors or ministers to all the parishes.

The Presbyterian government is established, and the {p221} highest ecclesiastical court is an assembly or synod of all the presbyters of the county. The magistrates may take any cause from this court, and determine it themselves.

The magistrates may try and depose or suspend any presbyter.

The militia is established in imitation of that of Switzerland, which, being well known, we shall not insist upon it. It will only be proper to make this addition, that an army of 20,000 men be annually drawn out by rotation, paid and encamped during six weeks in summer, that the duty of a camp may not be altogether unknown.

The magistrates nominate all the colonels and downwards. The senate all upwards. During war, the general nominates the colonel and downwards, and his commission is good for a twelvemonth; but after that, it must be confirmed by the magistrates of the county to which the regiment belongs.

The magistrates may break any officer in the county regiment, and the senate may do the same to any officer in the service. If the magistrates do not think proper to confirm the general's choice, they may nominate another officer in the place of him they reject.

All crimes are tried within the county by the magistrates and a jury; but the senate can stop any trial, and bring it before themselves.

Any county may indict any man before the senate for any crime.

The protector, the two secretaries, the council of state, with any five more that the senate appoints on extraordinary emergencies, are possessed of dictatorial power for six months.

The protector may pardon any person condemned by the inferior courts.

In time of war, no officer of the army that is in the field can have any civil office in the commonwealth.

The capital, which we shall call London, may be allowed four members in the senate. It may therefore be divided into four counties. The representatives of each of these choose one senator and ten magistrates. There are {p222} therefore in the city four senators, forty-four magistrates, and four hundred representatives. The magistrates have the same authority as in the counties. The representatives also have the same authority; but they never meet in one general court. They give their votes in their particular county or division of hundreds.

When they enact any city-law, the greatest number of counties or divisions determines the matter; and where these are equal, the magistrates have the casting vote.

The magistrates choose the mayor, sheriff, recorder, and other officers of the city.

In the commonwealth, no representative, magistrate, or senator, as such, has any salary. The protector, secretaries, councils, and ambassadors have salaries.

The first year in every century is set apart to correct all inequalities which time may have produced in the representative. This must be done by the legislature.

The following political aphorisms may explain the reason of these orders.

The lower sort of people and small proprietors are good enough judges of one not very distant from them in rank or habitation, and therefore, in their parochial meetings, will probably choose the best, or nearly the best

representative; but they are wholly unfit for county-meetings and for electing into the higher offices of the republic. Their ignorance gives the grandees an opportunity of deceiving them.

Ten thousand, even though they were not annually elected, are a large enough basis for any free government. It is true the nobles in Poland are more than 10,000, and yet these oppress the people; but as power continues there always in the same persons and families, this makes them, in a manner, a different nation from the people. Besides, the nobles are there united under a few heads of families.

All free governments must consist of two councils, a less and a greater; or, in other words, of a senate and people. The people, as Harrington observes, would want wisdom without the senate; the senate without the people would want honesty. {p223}

A large assembly of 1000, for instance, to represent the people, if allowed to debate, would fall into disorder. If not allowed to debate, the senate has a negative upon them, and the worst kind of negative—that before resolution.

Here therefore is an inconvenience which no government has yet fully remedied, but which is the easiest to be remedied in the world. If the people debate, all is confusion; if they do not debate, they can only resolve, and then the senate carves for them. Divide the people into many separate bodies, and then they may debate with safety, and every inconvenience seems to be prevented.

Cardinal de Retz says that all numerous assemblies, however composed, are mere mob, and swayed in their debates by the least motive. This we find confirmed by daily experience. When an absurdity strikes a member, he conveys it to his neighbour, and so on till the whole be infected. Separate this great body, and though every member be only of middling sense, it is not probable that anything but reason can prevail over the whole. Influence and example being removed, good sense will always get the better of bad among a number of people. Good sense is one thing; but follies are numberless, and every man has a different one. The only way of making a people wise is to keep them from uniting into large assemblies.

There are two things to be guarded against in every senate—its combination and its division. Its combination is most dangerous, and against this inconvenience we have provided the following remedies:—1. The great dependence of the senators on the people by annual election, and

that not by an undistinguishing rabble, like the English electors, but by men of fortune and education. 2. The small power they are allowed. They have few offices to dispose of. Almost all are given by the magistrates in the counties. 3. The court of competitors which, being composed of men that are their rivals next to them in interest and uneasy in their present situation, will be sure to take all advantages against them.

The division of the senate is prevented—1. By the ^{p224} smallness of their number. 2. As faction supposes a combination to a separate interest, it is prevented by their dependence on the people. 3. They have a power of expelling any factious member. It is true when another member of the same spirit comes from the county, they have no power of expelling him; nor is it fit they should, for that shows the humour to be in the people, and probably arises from some ill-conduct in public affairs. 4. Almost any man in a senate so regularly chosen by the people may be supposed fit for any civil office. It would be proper, therefore, for the senate to form some general resolutions with regard to the disposing of offices among the members, which resolutions would not confine them in critical times, when extraordinary parts on the one hand, or extraordinary stupidity on the other, appears in any senator; but yet they would be sufficient to prevent intrigue and faction, by making the disposal of the offices a thing of course. For instance, let it be a resolution:—That no man shall enjoy any office till he has sat four years in the senate; that, except ambassadors, no man shall be in office two years following; that no man shall attain the higher offices but through the lower; that no man shall be protector twice, etc. The senate of Venice govern themselves by such resolutions.

In foreign politics the interest of the senate can scarce ever be divided from that of the people, and therefore it is fit to make the senate absolute with regard to them, otherwise there could be no secrecy nor refined policy. Besides, without money no alliance can be executed, and the senate is still sufficiently dependent. Not to mention that the legislative power being always superior to the executive, the magistrates or representatives may interpose, whenever they think proper.

The chief support of the British Government is the Opposition of interests; but that, though in the main serviceable, breeds endless factions. In the foregoing plan, it does all the good without any of the harm. The competitors have no power of controlling the senate; they have only the power of accusing and appealing to the people. ^{p225}

It is necessary, likewise, to prevent both combination and division in the thousand magistrates. This is done sufficiently by the separation of places and interests.

But lest that should not be enough, their dependence on the 10,000 for their elections serves to the same purpose.

Nor is that all: for the 10,000 may resume the power whenever they please; and not only when they all please, but when any five of a hundred please, which will happen upon the very first suspicion of a separate interest.

The 10,000 are too large a body either to unite or divide, except when they meet in one place, and fall under the guidance of ambitious leaders. Not to mention their annual election by the whole body of the people that are of any consideration.

A small commonwealth is the happiest government in the world within itself, because everything lies under the eye of the rulers; but it may be subdued by great force from without. This scheme seems to have all the advantages both of a great and a little commonwealth.

Every county-law may be annulled either by the senate or another county, because that shows an opposition of interest: in which case no part ought to decide for itself. The matter must be referred to the whole, which will best determine what agrees with general interest.

As to the clergy and militia, the reasons of these orders are obvious. Without the dependence of the clergy on the civil magistrates, and without a militia, it is folly to think any free government will ever have security or stability.

In many governments the inferior magistrates have no rewards but what arise from their ambition, vanity, or public spirit. The salaries of the French judges amount not to the interest of the sums they pay for their offices. The Dutch burgomasters have little more immediate profit than the English justices of peace, or the members of the House of Commons formerly. But lest any should suspect that this would beget negligence in the administration (which is little to be feared, considering the natural ambition of mankind), {p226} let the magistrates have competent salaries. The senators have access to so many honourable and lucrative offices that their attendance needs not be bought. There is little attendance required of the representatives.

That the foregoing plan of government is practicable no one can doubt, who considers the resemblance it bears to the commonwealth of the United Provinces, formerly one of the wisest and most renowned governments in the world. The alterations in the present scheme are all evidently to the better. 1. The representation is more equal. 2. The unlimited power of the burgomasters in the towns, which forms a perfect aristocracy in the Dutch commonwealth, is corrected by a well-tempered democracy, in giving to the people the annual election of the county representatives. 3. The negative, which every province and town has upon the whole body of the Dutch republic, with regard to alliances, peace and war, and the imposition of taxes, is here removed. 4. The counties, in the present plan, are not so independent of each other, nor do they form separate bodies so much as the seven provinces; where the jealousy and envy of the smaller provinces and towns against the greater, particularly Holland and Amsterdam, have frequently disturbed the government. 5. Larger powers, though of the safest kind, are entrusted to the senate than the States-General possess; by which means the former may become more expeditious and secret in their resolutions than it is possible for the latter.

The chief alterations that could be made on the British Government, in order to bring it to the most perfect model of living monarchy, seem to be the following:—First, The plan of the Republican Parliament ought to be restored, by making the representation equal, and by allowing none to vote in the county elections who possess not a property of 200 pounds value. Secondly, As such a House of Commons would be too weighty for a frail House of Lords like the present, the bishops and Scots peers ought to be removed, whose behaviour, in former Parliaments, destroyed entirely the authority of that House. The number of the ^{p227} Upper House ought to be raised to three or four hundred; their seats not hereditary, but during life. They ought to have the election of their own members; and no commoner should be allowed to refuse a seat that was offered him. By this means the House of Lords would consist entirely of the men of chief credit, ability, and interest of the nation; and every turbulent leader in the House of Commons might be taken off and connected in interest with the House of Peers. Such an aristocracy would be a splendid barrier both to the monarchy and against it. At present the balance of our Government depends in some measure on the ability and behaviour of the sovereign, which are variable and uncertain circumstances.

I allow that this plan of limited monarchy, however corrected, is still liable to three great inconveniences. First, it removes not entirely, though it may soften, the parties of court and country; secondly, the king's personal character must still have a great influence on the Government; thirdly, the sword is in the hands of a single person, who will always neglect to discipline the militia, in order to have a pretence for keeping up a standing army. It is evident that this is a mortal distemper in British Government, of which it must at last inevitably perish. I must, however, confess that Sweden seems in some measure to have remedied this inconvenience, and to have a militia, with its limited monarchy, as well as a standing army, which is less dangerous than the British.

We shall conclude this subject with observing the falsehood of the common opinion that no large state, such as France or Britain, could ever be modelled into a commonwealth, but that such a form of government can only take place in a city or small territory. The contrary seems evident. Though it is more difficult to form a republican government in an extensive country than in a city, there is more facility, when once it is formed, of preserving it steady and uniform, without tumult and faction. It is not easy for the distant parts of a large state to combine in any plan of free government; but they easily conspire in the esteem and {p228} reverence of a single person, who, by means of this popular favour, may seize the power, and forcing the more obstinate to submit, may establish a monarchical government. On the other hand, a city readily concurs in the same notions of government, the natural equality of property favours liberty, and the nearness of habitation enables the citizens mutually to assist each other. Even under absolute princes the subordinate government of cities is commonly republican; while that of counties and provinces is monarchical. But these same circumstances, which facilitate the erection of commonwealths in cities, render their constitution more frail and uncertain. Democracies are turbulent. For however the people may be separated or divided into small parties, either in their votes or elections, their near habitation in a city will always make the force of popular tides and currents very sensible. Aristocracies are better adapted for peace and order, and accordingly were most admired by ancient writers; but they are jealous and oppressive. In a large government, which is modelled with masterly skill, there is compass and room enough to refine the democracy from the lower people, who may be admitted into the first elections or first concoction of

the commonwealth to the higher magistrates who direct all the movements. At the same time, the parts are so distant and remote that it is very difficult, either by intrigue, prejudice, or passion, to hurry them into any measures against the public interest.

It is needless to inquire whether such a government would be immortal. I allow the justness of the poet's exclamation on the endless projects of human race, "Man and for ever!" The world itself probably is not immortal. Such consuming plagues may arise as would leave even a perfect government a weak prey to its neighbours. We know not to what lengths enthusiasm or other extraordinary motions of the human mind may transport men, to the neglect of all order and public good. Where difference of interest is removed, whimsical and unaccountable factions often arise from personal favour or enmity. Perhaps rust may grow to the {p229} springs of the most accurate political machine and disorder its motions. Lastly, extensive conquests, when pursued, must be the ruin of every free government; and of the more perfect governments sooner than of the imperfect, because of the very advantages which the former possess above the latter. And though such a state ought to establish a fundamental law against conquests, yet republics have ambition as well as individuals, and present interest makes men forgetful of their posterity. It is a sufficient incitement to human endeavours that such a government would flourish for many ages, without pretending to bestow on any work of man that immortality which the Almighty seems to have refused to his own productions.

THAT POLITICS MAY BE REDUCED TO A SCIENCE.

It is a question with many whether there be any essential difference between one form of government and another? and whether every form may not become good or bad according as it is well or ill administered?^[113] Were it once admitted that all governments are alike, and that the only difference consists in the character and conduct of the governors, most political disputes would be at an end, and all zeal for one constitution above another must be esteemed mere bigotry and folly. But, though a friend to moderation, I cannot forbear condemning this sentiment, and should be sorry to think that human affairs admit of no greater stability than what they receive from the casual humours and characters of particular men. {p230}

It is true, those who maintain that the goodness of all government consists in the goodness of the administration, may cite many particular instances in history where the very same government in different hands has varied suddenly into the two opposite extremes of good and bad. Compare the French Government under Henry III. and under Henry IV. Oppression, levity, artifice on the part of the rulers; faction, sedition, treachery, rebellion, disloyalty on the part of the subjects: these compose the character of the former miserable era. But when the patriot and heroic prince who succeeded was once firmly seated on the throne, the government, the people, everything seemed to be totally changed; and all from the difference of the temper and sentiments of these two sovereigns. An equal difference of a contrary kind may be found on comparing the reigns of Elizabeth and James—at least with regard to foreign affairs; and instances of this kind may be multiplied almost without number from ancient as well as modern history.

But here I would beg leave to make a distinction. All absolute governments (and such, in a great measure, was that of England till the middle of the last century, notwithstanding the numerous panegyrics on

ancient English liberty) must very much depend on the administration; and this is one of the great inconveniences of that form of government. But a republican and free government would be a most obvious absurdity if the particular checks and controls provided by the constitution had really no influence, and made it not the interest, even of bad men, to operate for the public good. Such is the intention of these forms of government, and such is their real effect where they are wisely constituted: as, on the other hand, they are the sources of all disorder and of the blackest crimes where either skill or honesty has been wanting in their original frame and institution.

So great is the force of laws and of particular forms of government, and so little dependence have they on the humours and tempers of men, that consequences almost as general and certain may be deduced from them on most {p231} occasions as any which the mathematical sciences afford us.

The Roman government gave the whole legislative power to the commons, without allowing a negative either to the nobility or consuls. This unbounded power the commons possessed in a collective, not in a representative body. The consequences were—when the people, by success and conquest, had become very numerous and had spread themselves to a great distance from the capital, the city tribes, though the most contemptible, carried almost every vote. They were, therefore, most cajoled by every one who affected popularity; they were supported in idleness by the general distribution of corn, and by particular bribes, which they received from almost every candidate. By this means they became every day more licentious, and the Campus Martius was a perpetual scene of tumult and sedition: armed slaves were introduced among these rascally citizens, so that the whole government fell into anarchy, and the greatest happiness which the Romans could look for was the despotic power of the Cæsars. Such are the effects of democracy without a representative.

A nobility may possess the whole or any part of the legislative power of a state in two different ways. Either every nobleman shares the power as part of the whole body, or the whole body enjoys the power as composed of parts which have each a distinct power and authority. The Venetian aristocracy is an instance of the first kind of government; the Polish of the second. In the Venetian government the whole body of nobility possesses the whole power, and no nobleman has any authority which he receives not from the whole. In the Polish government every nobleman, by means of his fiefs, has a peculiar hereditary authority over his vassals, and the whole

body has no authority but what it receives from the concurrence of its parts. The distinct operations and tendencies of these two species of government might be made most apparent even *à priori*. A Venetian nobility is infinitely preferable to a Polish, let the humours and education of men {p232} be ever so much varied. A nobility who possess their power in common will preserve peace and order both among themselves and their subjects, and no member can have authority enough to control the laws for a moment. The nobles will preserve their authority over the people, but without any grievous tyranny or any breach of private property, because such a tyrannical government promotes not the interest of the whole body, however it may that of some individuals. There will be a distinction of rank between the nobility and people, but this will be the only distinction in the state. The whole nobility will form one body, and the whole people another, without any of those private feuds and animosities which spread ruin and desolation everywhere. It is easy to see the disadvantages of a Polish nobility in every one of these particulars.

It is possible so to constitute a free government as that a single person—call him doge, prince, or king—shall possess a very large share of power, and shall form a proper balance or counterpoise to the other parts of the legislature. This chief magistrate may be either elective or hereditary, and though the former institution may, to a superficial view, appear the most advantageous, yet a more accurate inspection will discover in it greater inconveniences than in the latter, and such as are founded on causes and principles eternal and immutable. The filling of the throne in such a government is a point of too great and too general interest not to divide the whole people into factions, from whence a civil war, the greatest of ills, may be apprehended almost with certainty upon every vacancy. The prince elected must be either a foreigner or a native; the former will be ignorant of the people whom he is to govern, suspicious of his new subjects and suspected by them, giving his confidence entirely to strangers, who will have no other care but of enriching themselves in the quickest manner, while their master's favour and authority are able to support them. A native will carry into the throne all his private animosities and friendships, and will never be regarded, in his elevation, without exciting the sentiments of envy {p233} in those who formerly considered him as their equal. Not to mention that a crown is too high a reward ever to be given to merit alone, and will always induce the candidates to employ force, or money, or

intrigue to procure the votes of the electors; so that such an election will give no better chance for superior merit in the prince than if the state had trusted to birth alone for determining their sovereign.

It may therefore be pronounced as a universal axiom in politics that a hereditary prince, a nobility without vassals, and a people voting by their representatives form the best monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. But in order to prove more fully that politics admit of general truths which are invariable by the humour or education either of subject or sovereign, it may not be amiss to observe some other principles of this science which may seem to deserve that character.

It may easily be observed that though free governments have been commonly the most happy for those who partake of their freedom, yet are they the most ruinous and oppressive to their provinces; and this observation may, I believe, be fixed as a maxim of the kind we are here speaking of. When a monarch extends his dominions by conquest he soon learns to consider his old and his new subjects as on the same footing, because, in reality, all his subjects are to him the same, except the few friends and favourites with whom he is personally acquainted. He does not, therefore, make any distinction between them in his general laws, and at the same time is no less careful to prevent all particular acts of oppression on the one as on the other. But a free state necessarily makes a great distinction, and must always do so, till men learn to love their neighbours as well as themselves. The conquerors, in such a government, are all legislators, and will be sure so to contrive matters, by restrictions of trade and by taxes, as to draw some private, as well as public advantage from their conquests. Provincial governors have also a better chance in a republic to escape with their plunder by means of bribery and interest; and their fellow-citizens, who find their own state to be {p234} enriched by the spoils of the subject-provinces, will be the more inclined to tolerate such abuses. Not to mention that it is a necessary precaution in a free state to change the governors frequently, which obliges these temporary tyrants to be more expeditious and rapacious, that they may accumulate sufficient wealth before they give place to their successors. What cruel tyrants were the Romans over the world during the time of their commonwealth! It is true they had laws to prevent oppression in their provincial magistrates, but Cicero informs us that the Romans could not better consult the interest of the provinces than by repealing these very laws. “For in that case,” says he,

“our magistrates, having entire impunity, would plunder no more than would satisfy their own rapaciousness; whereas at present they must also satisfy that of their judges, and of all the great men of Rome whose protection they stand in need of.” Who can read of the cruelties and oppressions of Verres without horror and astonishment? And who is not touched with indignation to hear that after Cicero had exhausted on that abandoned criminal all the thunders of his eloquence, and had prevailed so far as to get him condemned to the utmost extent of the laws, yet that cruel tyrant lived peaceably to old age in opulence and ease, and thirty years afterwards was put into the proscription by Mark Anthony on account of his exorbitant wealth, where he fell, with Cicero himself, and all the most virtuous men of Rome? After the dissolution of the commonwealth the Roman yoke became easier upon the provinces, as Tacitus informs us; and it may be observed that many of the worst emperors—Domitian, for instance—were very careful to prevent all oppression of the provinces. In Tiberius’s time Gaul was esteemed richer than Italy itself; nor do I find during the whole time of the Roman monarchy that the empire became less rich or populous in any of its provinces, though indeed its valour and military discipline were always upon the decline. The oppression and tyranny of the Carthaginians over their subject-states in Africa went so far, as we learn from Polybius, that, not content with ^{p235} exacting the half of all the produce of the ground, which of itself was a very high rent, they also loaded them with many other taxes. If we pass from ancient to modern times, we shall always find the observation to hold. The provinces of absolute monarchies are always better treated than those of free states. Compare the *Païs conquis* of France with Ireland, and you will be convinced of this truth; though this latter kingdom, being in a good measure peopled from England, possesses so many rights and privileges as should naturally make it challenge better treatment than that of a conquered province. Corsica is also an obvious instance to the same purpose.

There is an observation of Machiavel, with regard to the conquests of Alexander the Great, which I think may be regarded as one of those eternal political truths which no time nor accidents can vary. It may seem strange, says that politician, that such sudden conquests as those of Alexander should be settled so peaceably by his successors, and that the Persians, during all the confusions and civil wars of the Greeks, never made the smallest effort towards the recovery of their former independent

government. To satisfy us concerning the cause of this remarkable event, we may consider that a monarch may govern his subjects in two different ways. He may either follow the maxims of the eastern princes, and stretch his power so far as to leave no distinction of ranks among his subjects, but what proceeds immediately from himself—no advantages of birth; no hereditary honours and possessions; and, in a word, no credit among the people except from his commission alone. Or a monarch may exert his power after a milder manner, like our European princes, and leave other sources of honour, beside his smile and favour: birth, titles, possessions, valour, integrity, knowledge, or great and fortunate achievements. In the former species of government, after a conquest, it is impossible ever to shake off the yoke, since no one possesses among the people so much personal credit and authority as to begin such an enterprise; whereas, in the latter, the least misfortune or discord of the victors {p236} will encourage the vanquished to take arms, who have leaders ready to prompt and conduct them in every undertaking.[114] {p237}

Such is the reasoning of Machiavel, which seems to me very solid and conclusive, though I wish he had not mixed falsehood with truth in asserting that monarchies governed according to the Eastern policy, though more easily kept when once subdued, yet are the most difficult to subdue, since they cannot contain any powerful subject whose discontent and faction may facilitate the enterprises of an enemy. For besides that such a tyrannical government enervates the courage of men and renders them indifferent towards the fortunes of their sovereign; besides this, I say, we find by experience that even the temporary and delegated authority of the generals and magistrates being always, in such governments, as absolute within its sphere as that of the prince himself, is able, with barbarians accustomed to a blind submission, to produce the most dangerous and fatal revolutions. So that, in every respect, a gentle government is preferable, and gives the greatest security to the sovereign as well as to the subject.

Legislators, therefore, ought not to trust the future government of a state entirely to chance, but ought to provide a system of laws to regulate the administration of public affairs to the latest posterity. Effects will always correspond to causes, and wise regulations in any commonwealth are the most valuable legacy which can be left to future ages. In the smallest court or office the stated forms and methods by which business must be conducted are found to be a considerable check on the natural depravity of

mankind. Why should not the case be the same in public affairs? Can we ascribe the stability and wisdom of the Venetian Government through so many ages to anything but the form of government? And is it not easy to point out those defects in the original constitution which produced the tumultuous governments of Athens and Rome, and ended at last in the ruin of these two famous republics? And so little dependence has this affair on the humours and education of particular men that one part of the same republic may be wisely conducted and another weakly, by the very same men, merely on account of the {p238} difference of the forms and institutions by which these parts are regulated. Historians inform us that this was actually the case with Genoa; for while the state was always full of sedition, and tumult, and disorder, the bank of St. George, which had become a considerable part of the people, was conducted for several ages with the utmost integrity and wisdom.

The ages of greatest public spirit are not always most eminent for private virtue. Good laws may beget order and moderation in the government where the manners and customs have instilled little humanity or justice into the tempers of men. The most illustrious period of the Roman history, considered in a political view, is that between the beginning of the first and the end of the last Punic War; the due balance between the nobility and people being then fixed by the contests of the tribunes, and not being yet lost by the extent of conquests. Yet at this very time the horrid practice of poisoning was so common that, during part of the season, a prætor punished capitally for this crime above three thousand persons in a part of Italy, and found informations of this nature still multiplying upon him. There is a similar, or rather a worse instance in the more early times of the commonwealth; so depraved in private life were that people, whom in their histories we so much admire. I doubt not but they were really more virtuous during the time of the two Triumvirates, when they were tearing their common country to pieces, and spreading slaughter and desolation over the face of the earth merely for the choice of tyrants.

Here, then, is a sufficient inducement to maintain, with the utmost zeal, in every free state, those forms and institutions by which liberty is secured, the public good consulted, and the avarice or ambition of particular men restrained and punished. Nothing does more honour to human nature than to see it susceptible of so noble a passion, as nothing can be a greater indication of meanness of heart in any man than to see him devoid of it. A

man who loves only himself, without regard to friendship and merit, is a detestable {p239} monster; and a man who is only susceptible of friendship, without public spirit or a regard to the community, is deficient in the most material part of virtue.

But this is a subject which needs not be longer insisted on at present. There are enough of zealots on both sides who kindle up the passions of their partisans, and under the pretence of public good pursue the interests and ends of their particular faction. For my part I shall always be more fond of promoting moderation than zeal, though perhaps the surest way of producing moderation in every party is to increase our zeal for the public. Let us therefore try, if it be possible, from the foregoing doctrine to draw a lesson of moderation with regard to the parties into which our country is at present divided; at the same time, that we allow not this moderation to abate the industry and passion with which every individual is bound to pursue the good of his country.

Those who either attack or defend a minister in such a government as ours, where the utmost liberty is allowed, always carry matters to an extreme, and exaggerate his merit or demerit with regard to the public. His enemies are sure to charge him with the greatest enormities, both in domestic and foreign management, and there is no meanness or crime of which, in their account, he is not capable. Unnecessary wars, scandalous treaties, profusion of public treasure, oppressive taxes, every kind of mal-administration is ascribed to him. To aggravate the charge, his pernicious conduct, it is said, will extend its baleful influence even to posterity, by undermining the best constitution in the world, and disordering that wise system of laws, institutions, and customs by which our ancestors for so many centuries have been so happily governed. He is not only a wicked minister in himself, but has removed every security provided against wicked ministers for the future.

On the other hand, the partisans of the minister make his panegyric run as high as the accusation against him, and celebrate his wise, steady, and moderate conduct in every part of his administration. The honour and interest of the {p240} nation supported abroad, public credit maintained at home, persecution restrained, faction subdued: the merit of all these blessings is ascribed solely to the minister. At the same time he crowns all his other merits by a religious care of the best constitution in the world,

which he has preserved in all its parts, and has transmitted entire to be the happiness and security of the latest posterity.

When this accusation and panegyric are received by the partisans of each party, no wonder they beget a most extraordinary ferment on both sides, and fill the nation with the most violent animosities. But I would fain persuade these party-zealots that there is a flat contradiction both in the accusation and panegyric, and that it were impossible for either of them to run so high were it not for this contradiction. If our constitution be really that noble fabric, the pride of Britain, the envy of our neighbours, raised by the labour of so many centuries, repaired at the expense of so many millions, and cemented by such a profusion of blood—I say, if our constitution does in any degree deserve these eulogies, it would never have suffered a wicked and weak minister to govern triumphantly for a course of twenty years, when opposed by the greatest geniuses of the nation, who exercised the utmost liberty of tongue and pen, in Parliament and in their frequent appeals to the people. But if the minister be wicked and weak to the degree so strenuously insisted on, the constitution must be faulty in its original principles, and he cannot consistently be charged with undermining the best constitution in the world. A constitution is only so far good as it provides a remedy against mal-administration, and if the British constitution, when in its greatest vigour, and repaired by two such remarkable events as the Revolution and Accession, by which our ancient royal family was sacrificed to it—if our constitution, I say, with so great advantages does not, in fact, provide any such remedy, we are rather beholden to any minister who undermines it and affords us an opportunity of erecting in its place a better constitution.

I would make use of the same topics to moderate the zeal {p241} of those who defend the minister. Is our constitution so excellent? Then a change of ministry can be no such dreadful event, since it is essential to such a constitution, in every ministry, both to preserve itself from violation and to prevent all enormities in the administration. Is our constitution very bad? Then so extraordinary a jealousy and apprehension on account of changes is ill-placed, and a man should no more be anxious in this case than a husband, who had married a wife from the stews, should be watchful to prevent her infidelity. Public affairs in such a constitution must necessarily go to confusion, by whatever hands they are conducted, and the zeal of patriots is much less requisite in that case than the patience and submission

of philosophers. The virtue and good intentions of Cato and Brutus are highly laudable, but to what purpose did their zeal serve? To nothing but to hasten the fatal period of the Roman government, and render its convulsions and dying agonies more violent and painful.

I would not be understood to mean that public affairs deserve no care and attention at all. Would men be moderate and consistent, their claims might be admitted—at least might be examined. The country-party might still assert that our constitution, though excellent, will admit of mal-administration to a certain degree, and therefore, if the minister be bad, it is proper to oppose him with a suitable degree of zeal. And, on the other hand, the court-party may be allowed, upon the supposition that the minister were good, to defend, and with some zeal too, his administration. I would only persuade men not to contend, as if they were fighting *pro aris et focis*, and change a good constitution into a bad one by the violence of their factions.

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I have not here considered anything that is personal in the present controversy. In the best civil constitution, {p243} where every man is restrained by the most rigid laws, it is easy to discover either the good or bad intentions of a minister, and to judge whether his personal character deserves love or hatred. But such questions are of little importance to the public, and lay those who employ their pens upon them under a just suspicion either of malevolence or flattery.

NOTES, POLITICS REDUCED TO A SCIENCE.

113

“For forms of government let fools contest;
Whate’er is best administer’d is best.”

Essay on Man, Book iii.

114 I have taken it for granted, according to the supposition of Machiavel, that the ancient Persians had no nobility, though there is reason to suspect that the Florentine secretary, who seems to have been better acquainted with the Roman than the Greek authors, was mistaken in this particular. The more ancient Persians, whose manners are described by Xenophon, were a free people, and had nobility. Their ὀμοτιμοὶ were preserved even after the extending of their conquests and the consequent change of their government. Arrian mentions them in Darius's time (*De exped. Alex.*, lib. 2). Historians also speak often of the persons in command as men of family. Tygranes, who was general of the Medes under Xerxes, was of the race of Achmænes (Herod., lib. 7, cap. 62). Artachæas, who directed the cutting of the canal about Mount Athos, was of the same family (*id.*, cap. 117). Megabyzus was one of the seven eminent Persians who conspired against the Magi. His son Zopyrus was in the highest command under Darius, and delivered Babylon to him. His grandson Megabyzus commanded the army defeated at Marathon. His great grandson Zopyrus was also eminent, and was banished Persia (Herod., lib. 3; Thuc., lib. 1). Rosaces, who commanded an army in Egypt under Artaxerxes, was also descended from one of the seven conspirators (Diod. Sic., lib. 16). Agesilaus (in Xenophon, *Hist. Græc.* lib. 4), being desirous of making a marriage betwixt King Cotys, his ally, and the daughter of Spithridates, a Persian of rank who had deserted to him, first asks Cotys what rank Spithridates is of. One of the most considerable in Persia, says Cotys. Ariæus, when offered the sovereignty by Clearchus and the ten thousand Greeks, refused it as of too low a rank, and said that so many eminent Persians would never endure his rule (*id.*, *De exped.* lib. 2). Some of the families, descended from the seven Persians above mentioned, remained during all Alexander's successors; and Mithridates, in Antiochus's time, is said by Polybius to be descended from one of them (lib. 5, cap. 43). Artabazus was esteemed, as Arrian says, ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις Περσῶν (lib. 3). And when Alexander married in one day eighty of his captains to Persian women, his intention plainly was to ally the Macedonians with the most eminent Persian families (*id.*, lib. 7). Diodorus Siculus says they were of the most noble birth in Persia (lib. 17). The government of Persia was despotic, and conducted in many respects after the Eastern manner, but was not carried so far as to extirpate all nobility, and confound all ranks and orders. It left men who were still great, by themselves and their family, independent of their office and commission. And the reason why the Macedonians kept so easily dominion over them was owing to other causes easy to be found in the historians, though it must be owned that Machiavel's reasoning was in itself just, however doubtful its application to the present case.

115 What our author's opinion was of the famous minister here pointed at may be learned from that essay, printed in the former editions, under the title of "A Character of Sir Robert Walpole." It was as follows:—"There never was a man whose actions and character have been more earnestly and openly canvassed than those of the present minister, who, having governed a learned and free nation for so long a time, amidst such mighty opposition, may make a large library of what has been written for and against him, and is the subject of above half the paper that has been blotted in the nation within these twenty years. I wish, for the honour of our country, that any one character of him had been drawn with such judgment and impartiality as to have credit with posterity, and to show that our liberty has, once at least, been employed to good purpose. I am only afraid of failing in the former quality of judgment; but if it should be so, it is but one page more thrown away, after a hundred thousand, upon the same subject, that have perished and become useless. In the meantime, I shall flatter myself with the pleasing imagination that the following character will be adopted by future historians:—

"Sir Robert Walpole, Prime Minister of Great Britain, is a man of ability, not a genius; good-natured, not virtuous; constant, not magnanimous; moderate, not equitable.[116] His virtues, in some instances, are free from the alloy of those vices which usually accompany such virtues. He is a generous friend, without being a bitter enemy. His vices, in other instances, are not compensated by those virtues which are nearly allied to them: his want of enterprise is not attended with frugality. The private character of the man is better than the public, his virtues more than his vices, his fortune greater than his fame. With many good qualities he has incurred the public hatred; with good capacity he has not escaped ridicule. He would have been esteemed more worthy of his high station had he never possessed it; and is better qualified for the second than for the first place in any Government. His ministry has been more advantageous to his family than to the public, better for this age than for posterity, and more pernicious by bad precedents than by real grievances. During his time trade has flourished, liberty declined, and learning gone to ruin. As I am a man, I love him; as I am a scholar, I hate him; as I am a Briton, I calmly wish his fall. And were I a member of either House I would give my vote for removing him from St. James's, but should be glad to see him retire to Houghton Hall, to pass the remainder of his days in ease and pleasure."

The author is pleased to find that after animosities are laid, and calumny has ceased, the whole nation almost have returned to the same moderate sentiments with regard to this great man, if they are not rather become more favourable to him, by a very natural transition from one extreme to another. The author would not oppose those humane sentiments towards the dead, though he cannot forbear observing that the not paying more of our public debts was, as hinted in this character, a great, and the only great error in that long administration.

116 Moderate in the exercise of power, not equitable in engrossing it.

OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT.

Nothing is more surprising to those who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye, than to see the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and to observe the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we inquire by what means this wonder is brought about, we shall find that, as force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is therefore on opinion only that government is founded, and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular. The Soldan of Egypt, or the Emperor of Rome, might drive his harmless subjects like brute beasts against their sentiments and inclination; but he must, at least, have led his mamalukes, or prætorian bands, like men, by their opinion.

Opinion is of two kinds—viz., opinion of interest and opinion of right. By opinion of interest, I chiefly understand the sense of the public advantage which is reaped from government, together with the persuasion that the particular government which is established is equally advantageous with any other that could easily be settled. When this opinion prevails among the generality of a state, {p244} or among those who have the force in their hands, it gives great security to any government.

Right is of two kinds—right to power and right to property. What prevalence opinion of the first kind has over mankind may easily be understood by observing the attachment which all nations have to their ancient government, and even to those names which have had the sanction of antiquity. Antiquity always begets the opinion of right, and whatever disadvantageous sentiments we may entertain of mankind, they are always found to be prodigal both of blood and treasure in the maintenance of public justice. This passion we may denominate enthusiasm, or we may give it what appellation we please; but a politician who should overlook its

influence on human affairs would prove himself but of a very limited understanding. There is, indeed, no particular in which at first sight there may appear a greater contradiction in the frame of the human mind than the present. When men act in a faction they are apt, without any shame or remorse, to neglect all the ties of honour and morality in order to serve their party; and yet when a faction is formed upon a point of right or principle, there is no occasion where men discover a greater obstinacy and a more determined sense of justice and equity. The same social disposition of mankind is the cause of both these contradictory appearances.

It is sufficiently understood that the opinion of right to property is of the greatest moment in all matters of government. A noted author has made property the foundation of all government; and most of our political writers seem inclined to follow him in that particular. This is carrying the matter too far; but still it must be owned that the opinion of right to property has a great influence in this subject.

Upon these three opinions, therefore, of public interest, of right to power, and of right to property, are all governments founded, and all authority of the few over the many. There are indeed other principles which add force to these, and determine, limit, or alter their operation; such as {p245} self-interest, fear, and affection. But still we may assert that these other principles can have no influence alone, but suppose the antecedent influence of those opinions above mentioned. They are therefore to be esteemed the secondary, not the original principles of government.

For, first, as to self-interest, by which I mean the expectation of particular rewards, distinct from the general protection which we receive from government, it is evident that the magistrate's authority must be antecedently established, or at least be hoped for, in order to produce this expectation. The prospect of reward may augment the authority with regard to some particular persons, but can never give birth to it with regard to the public. Men naturally look for the greatest favours from their friends and acquaintance, and therefore the hopes of any considerable number of the state would never centre in any particular set of men if these men had no other title to magistracy, and had no separate influence over the opinions of mankind. The same observation may be extended to the other two principles of fear and affection. No man would have any reason to fear the fury of a tyrant if he had no authority over any but from fear; since as a single man his bodily force can reach but a small way, and all further power

he possesses must be founded either on our opinion or on the presumed opinion of others. And though affection to wisdom and virtue in a sovereign extends very far and has great influence, yet he must be antecedently supposed invested with a public character, otherwise the public esteem will serve him in no stead, nor will his virtue have any influence beyond a narrow sphere.

A government may endure for several ages, though the balance of power and the balance of property do not agree. This chiefly happens where any rank or order of the state has acquired a large share of the property, but from the original constitution of the government has no share of the power. Under what pretext would any individual of that order assume authority in public affairs? As men are commonly much attached to their ancient government, it is {p246} not to be expected that the public would ever favour such usurpations. But where the original constitution allows any share of power, though small, to an order of men who possess a large share of the property, it is easy for them gradually to stretch their authority and bring the balance of power to coincide with that of property. This has been the case with the House of Commons in England.

Most writers who have treated of the British Government have supposed that as the House of Commons represents all the commons of Great Britain, so its weight in the scale is proportioned to the property and power of all whom it represents. But this principle must not be received as absolutely true. For though the people are apt to attach themselves more to the House of Commons than to any other member of the constitution—that House being chosen by them as their representatives and as the public guardians of their liberty—yet are there instances where the House, even when in opposition to the Crown, has not been followed by the people; as we may particularly observe of the Tory House of Commons in the reign of King William. Were the members of the House obliged to receive instructions from their constituents, like the Dutch deputies, this would entirely alter the case; and if such immense power and riches as those of the whole commons of Britain were brought into the scale, it is not easy to conceive that the Crown could either influence the multitude of people or withstand that overbalance of property. It is true the Crown has great influence over the collective body of Britain in the elections of members; but were this influence, which at present is only exerted once in seven years, to be employed in bringing over the people to every vote, it would

soon be wasted, and no skill, popularity or revenue, could support it. I must, therefore, be of opinion that an alteration in this particular would introduce a total alteration in our government, and would soon reduce it to a pure republic; and perhaps to a republic of no inconvenient form. For though the people collected in a body like the Roman tribes be quite unfit for government, yet when ^{p247} dispersed in small bodies they are more susceptible both of reason and order; the force of popular currents and tides is in a great measure broken; and the public interest may be pursued with some method and constancy. But it is needless to reason any further concerning a form of government which is never likely to have place in Britain, and which seems not to be the aim of any party amongst us. Let us cherish and improve our ancient government as much as possible, without encouraging a passion for such dangerous novelties.

OF POLITICAL SOCIETY.

Had every man sufficient sagacity to perceive at all times the strong interest which binds him to the observance of justice and equity, and strength of mind sufficient to persevere in a steady adherence to a general and a distant interest, in opposition to the allurements of present pleasure and advantage—there had never, in that case, been any such thing as government or political society, but each man following his natural liberty had lived in entire peace and harmony with all others. What need of positive laws where natural justice is, of itself, a sufficient restraint? Why create magistrates where there never arises any disorder or iniquity? Why abridge our native freedom when, in every instance, the utmost exertion of it is found innocent and beneficial? It is evident that if government were totally useless it never could have place, and that the sole foundation of the duty of allegiance is the advantage which it procures to society by preserving peace and order among mankind.

When a number of political societies are erected, and maintain a great intercourse together, a new set of rules are immediately discovered to be useful in that particular ^{p248} situation, and accordingly take place under the title of “Laws of Nations.” Of this kind are the sacredness of the persons of ambassadors, abstaining from poisoned arms, quarter in war, with others of that kind, which are plainly calculated for the advantage of states and kingdoms in their intercourse with each other.

The rules of justice, such as prevail among individuals, are not entirely suspended among political societies. All princes pretend a regard to the rights of others; and some, no doubt, without hypocrisy. Alliances and treaties are every day made between independent states, which would only be so much waste of parchment if they were not found, by experience, to have some influence and authority. But here is the difference between kingdoms and individuals. Human nature cannot by any means subsist without the association of individuals; and that association never could have

place were no regard paid to the laws of equity and justice. Disorder, confusion, the war of all against all, are the necessary consequences of such a licentious conduct. But nations can subsist without intercourse. They may even subsist, in some degree, under a general war. The observance of justice, though useful among them, is not guarded by so strong a necessity as among individuals; and the moral obligation holds proportion with the usefulness. All politicians will allow, and most philosophers, that reasons of state may, in particular emergencies, dispense with the rules of justice, and invalidate any treaty or alliance where the strict observance of it would be prejudicial in a considerable degree to either of the contracting parties. But nothing less than the extremest necessity, it is confessed, can justify individuals in a breach of promise, Or an invasion of the properties of others.

In a confederated commonwealth, such as the Achæan Republic of old, or the Swiss Cantons and United Provinces in modern times; as the league has here a peculiar utility, the conditions of union have a peculiar sacredness and authority, and a violation of them would be equally criminal, Or even more criminal than any private injury or injustice. {p249}

The long and helpless infancy of man requires the combination of parents for the subsistence of their young, and that combination requires the virtue of chastity or fidelity to the marriage-bed. Without such a utility, it will readily be owned that such a virtue would never have been thought of.

An infidelity of this nature is much more pernicious in women than in men; hence the laws of chastity are much stricter over the one sex than over the other.

These rules have all a reference to generation, and yet women past child-bearing are no more supposed to be exempted from them than those in the flower of their youth and beauty. General rules are often extended beyond the principle whence they first arise, and this holds in all matters of taste and sentiment. It is a vulgar story at Paris that during the rage of the Mississippi a hump-backed fellow went every day into the Rue de Quincempoix, where the stock-jobbers met in great crowds, and was well paid for allowing them to make use of his hump as a desk in order to sign their contracts upon it. Would the fortune which he raised by this invention make him a handsome fellow, though it be confessed that personal beauty arises very much from ideas of utility? The imagination is influenced by association of ideas, which, though they arise at first from the judgment, are

not easily altered by every particular exception that occurs to us. To which we may add, in the present case of chastity, that the example of the old would be pernicious to the young, and that women, continually thinking that a certain time would bring them the liberty of indulgence, would naturally advance that period and think more lightly of this whole duty so requisite to society.

Those who live in the same family have such frequent opportunities of licence of this kind that nothing could preserve purity of manners were marriage allowed among the nearest relations, or were any intercourse of love between them ratified by law and custom. Incest, therefore, being pernicious in a superior degree, has also a superior turpitude and moral deformity annexed to it. {p250}

What is the reason why, by the Athenian laws, one might marry a half-sister by the father but not by the mother? Plainly this:—The manners of the Athenians were so reserved that a man was never permitted to approach the women's apartment, even in the same family, unless where he visited his own mother. His step-mother and her children were as much shut up from him as the women of any other family, and there was as little danger of any criminal correspondence between them. Uncles and nieces, for a like reason, might marry at Athens, but neither these nor half-brothers and sisters could contract that alliance at Rome, where the intercourse was more open between the sexes. Public utility is the cause of all these variations.

To repeat to a man's prejudice anything that escaped him in private conversation, or to make any such use of his private letters, is highly blamed. The free and social intercourse of minds must be extremely checked where no such rules of fidelity are established.

Even in repeating stories, whence we can see no ill consequences to result, the giving one's authors is regarded as a piece of indiscretion, if not of immorality. These stories, in passing from hand to hand and receiving all the usual variations, frequently come about to the persons concerned and produce animosities and quarrels among people whose intentions are the most innocent and inoffensive.

To pry into secrets, to open or even read the letters of others, to play the spy upon their words and looks and actions—what habits more inconvenient in society? what habits, of consequence, more blameable?

This principle is also the foundation of most of the laws of good manners, a kind of lesser morality calculated for the ease of company and

conversation. Too much or too little ceremony are both blamed, and everything which promotes ease without an indecent familiarity is useful and laudable.

Constancy in friendships, attachments, and intimacies is {p251} commonly very commendable, and is requisite to support trust and good correspondence in society. But in places of general though casual concourse, where the pursuit of health and pleasure brings people promiscuously together, public conveniency has dispensed with this maxim, and custom there promotes an unreserved conversation for the time by indulging the privilege of dropping afterwards every indifferent acquaintance without breach of civility or good manners.

Even in societies which are established on principles the most immoral and the most destructive to the interests of the general society there are required certain rules which a species of false honour as well as private interest engages the members to observe. Robbers and pirates, it has often been remarked, could not maintain their pernicious confederacy did they not establish a new distributive justice among themselves and recall those laws of equity which they have violated with the rest of mankind.

“I hate a drinking companion,” says the Greek proverb, “who never forgets.” The follies of the last debauch should be buried in eternal oblivion, in order to give full scope to the follies of the next.

Among nations where an immoral gallantry, if covered with a thin veil of mystery, is in some degree authorized by custom, there immediately arise a set of rules calculated for the conveniency of that attachment. The famous court or parliament of love in Provence decided formerly all difficult cases of this nature.

In societies for play there are laws required for the conduct of the game, and these laws are different in each game. The foundation, I own, of such societies is frivolous, and the laws are in a great measure, though not altogether, capricious and arbitrary. So far is there a material difference between them and the rules of justice, fidelity and loyalty. The general societies of men are absolutely requisite for the subsistence of the species, and the public conveniency, which regulates morals, is inviolably established in the nature of man and of the world in which he lives. The {p252} comparison, therefore, in these respects is very imperfect. We may only learn from it the necessity of rules wherever men have any intercourse with each other.

They cannot even pass each other on the road without rules. Waggoners, coachmen, and postilions have principles by which they give way, and these are chiefly founded on mutual ease and convenience. Sometimes also they are arbitrary, at least dependent on a kind of capricious analogy, like many of the reasonings of lawyers.[\[117\]](#)

To carry the matter further, we may observe that it is impossible for men so much as to murder each other without statutes and maxims and an idea of justice and honour. War has its laws as well as peace, and even that sportive kind of war carried on among wrestlers, boxers, cudgel-players, gladiators, is regulated by fixed principles. Common interest and utility beget infallibly a standard of right and wrong among the parties concerned.

NOTE, OF POLITICAL SOCIETY.

117 That the lighter machine yields to the heavier, and in machines of the same kind, that the empty yields to the loaded—this rule is founded on convenience. That those who are going to the capital take place of those who are coming from it—this seems to be founded on some idea of the dignity of the great city, and of the preference of the future to the past. From like reasons, among foot-walkers, the right-hand entitles a man to the wall and prevents jostling, which peaceable people find very disagreeable and inconvenient.

ALPHABETICAL ARRANGEMENT OF AUTHORITIES CITED BY HUME.

- ÆMILIUS, PAULUS, Roman general, B.C. 230–157. Defeated Perseus of Macedonia.
- AGATHOCLES, tyrant of Syracuse, born *circa* B.C. 361, died 289.
- ALCIBIADES, Athenian general and statesman, born B.C. 450, died B.C. 404. A disciple of Socrates, and noted for dissoluteness.
- ALEXANDER the Great, born B.C. 356, died 323.
- ANACHARSIS, Scythian philosopher, B.C. 600. Much esteemed by Solon.
- ANTHONY, MARK, Triumvir, born *circa* B.C. 85, died B.C. 30. Best known through his association with Cleopatra.
- ANTIGONUS, one of the greatest generals of Alexander the Great. Slain in 301 at Ipsus.
- ANTIPATER, minister of Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great, died B.C. 319.
- APPIANUS (Appian), belonged to the time of Trajan, and wrote the history of Rome in Greek.
- ARATUS, general of the Achæan League, born B.C. 271, died 213.
- ARBUTHNOT, JOHN, physician, born 1675, died 1735. Associate of Pope and Swift, and wrote on ancient measures, weights, and coins.
- ARISTOTLE, philosopher, the Stagirite, born B.C. 384, died 332. Tutor of Alexander the Great.
- ARRIANUS, Greek historian, resided at Rome in the second century, a disciple of Epictetus, died *circa* B.C. 160.
- ATHENÆUS, grammarian, born in Egypt in the third century.
- ATTALUS, King of Pergamus, died B.C. 197.
- AUGUSTUS, first Roman Emperor, born B.C. 63, grandnephew of Julius Cæsar, died B.C. 14.
- CÆSAR, CAIUS JULIUS, B.C. 100–44, Roman warrior and administrator, known to every schoolboy from his *Commentaries*. {p254}

CAMILLUS, MARCUS FURIUS, died B.C. 365, Roman warrior, six times military tribune and five times dictator.

CARACALLA, brother of Geta, whom he murdered B.C. 212.

CATALINA, LUCIUS SERGIUS (Catiline), died B.C. 62, noted for his depraved habits and his conspiracy that drew from Cicero his famous orations.

CATO, MARCUS PORCIUS, surnamed from Utica, his birthplace, Uticensis, died B.C. 46.

CATO, the elder, born B.C. 234, died 149, noted for his courage and temperance.

CICERO, MARCUS TULLIUS, Roman orator, born B.C. 106, died 43.

CLAUDIUS, Roman Emperor, born B.C. 9, died B.C. 54. Visited Britain B.C. 43.

CLEOMENES, King of Sparta, died B.C. 220.

CLODIUS, enemy of Cicero, died B.C. 52. Used to go about Rome with an intimidating band of gladiators.

COLUMELLA, native of Spain, resided at Rome in the reign of Claudius, B.C. 41–54.

COMMODUS, Roman Emperor, son of Marcus Aurelius, born B.C. 161, died 192.

CTESIPHON. In his defence Demosthenes delivered his famous oration “On the Crown” in B.C. 330.

DEMETRIUS PHALEREUS, Greek orator and statesman, born B.C. 345, died *circa* 283.

DEMOSTHENES, Greek orator, B.C. 385–322, whose speeches against the encroachments of Philip of Macedon have given the general term “philippics” to powerful invective.

DION CASSIUS, *circa* 200–250, wrote history of Rome in Greek.

DIONYSIUS HALICARNASSÆUS, Greek rhetorician and historian, born B.C. 29, died B.C. 7. Chief work, *Roman Archæology*.

DIONYSIUS, the elder, tyrant of Syracuse, B.C. 430–367; besides being a warrior, was a patron of literary men and artists. Built Lautumia, the famous prison, called also the “Ear of Dionysius.”

DIODORUS SICULUS, wrote a universal history, flourished *circa* B.C. 50.

DRUSUS, Roman consul, born B.C. 38.

EPAMINONDAS, Theban statesman and general, died B.C. 362.

FLORUS, Roman historian, lived in the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian.

FOLARD, JEAN CHARLES, military tactician, born at Avignon 1669, died 1752, published an edition of *Polybius*. {p255}

GARCILASSO DE LA VEGA, called the Inca because descended from the royal family of Peru (1530–1620), wrote *History of Peru* and *History of Florida*.

GEE, JOSHUA, eighteenth-century London merchant, wrote *Trade and Navigation of Great Britain* (1730).

GERMANICUS, son of Nero, died B.C. 19, aged 34.

GETA, second son of Emperor Severus, born B.C. 189, died 212.

GUICCIARDINI, FRANCISCO, Italian historian (1482–1540).

HANNIBAL, great Carthaginian general, born B.C. 247, died 183.

HELIOGABALUS, Roman emperor, born *circa* B.C. 205, died 222.

HERODIAN, flourished in the third century, wrote in Greek a history of the period from the death of Marcus Aurelius to 238.

HESIOD, one of the earliest Greek poets, supposed to have flourished in the eighth century B.C. “Works and Days” is his best known poem.

HIERO II., King of Syracuse, died B.C. 215, aged 92. Archimedes lived in his reign.

HIRTIUS, Roman consul, contemporary with Cæsar and Cicero; is said to be the author of the eighth book of Cæsar’s *Commentaries*.

HYPERIDES, Athenian orator, died B.C. 322, disciple of Plato.

ISOCRATES, Greek orator, born B.C. 436, died 338.

JUSTIN, a Latin historian, lived in second or third century, epitomized *Historiæ Philippicæ of Trogus Pompeius, a native of Gaul*.

LIVIOUS, TITUS (Livy), historian of Rome (B.C. 59–17). Of his 142 books, only 35 have been preserved.

LONGINUS, DIONYSIUS, Greek philosopher, died B.C. 273. His extensive knowledge earned him the title of “The living library.”

LUCIAN, Greek writer, lived in the time of Marcus Aurelius.

LYCURGUS, Spartan lawgiver, whose severe regulations made the Spartans a race of warriors, is said to have flourished in the ninth century B.C.

LYSIAS, Greek orator, born B.C. 458, died 373, wrote 230 orations, of which only 35 remain.

MACHIAVELLI, Florentine statesman and historian, born 1469, died 1527.

MAILLET, French writer, born 1656, died 1738, consul in Egypt and at Leghorn.

MARTIAL, Roman poet, born B.C. 43.

MASSINISSA, King of Numidia, born B.C. 238, died 148.

MAZARIN, JULES, cardinal, and first minister of Louis XIV. (1602–61).

{p256}

NABIS, Spartan tyrant, died B.C. 192, noted for his cruelty.

NERO, Roman emperor, born B.C. 37, died 67.

OCTAVIUS, became Emperor Augustus.

OVIDIUS PUBLIUS NASO (Ovid), Roman poet, B.C. 43–B.C. 18, enjoyed the patronage of Augustus until banished B.C. 8. Chief works—*Amores*, *De Arte Amandi*, *Fasti*.

PATERCULUS, Roman historian, born *circa* B.C. 19, died B.C. 31.

PAUSANIAS, Greek writer, flourished *circa* B.C. 120–140.

PERSEUS, or PERSES, last King of Macedonia. Ascended the throne B.C. 178.

PESCENIUS NIGER, became Roman Emperor in 193.

PETRONIUS, died B.C. 66, Roman author, lived at the court of Nero, and acquired celebrity for his licentiousness.

PHILIP of Macedon, born 382, assassinated 336.

PLATO, born B.C. 429, died 347.

PLAUTUS, Roman comedy writer, born *circa* B.C. 255, died 184.

PLINY. There were two Plinys—one born B.C. 23, the other, nephew of the preceding, B.C. 62. The former was a naturalist; the latter a pleader and soldier, whose chief writings are his account of the Christians and *Epistles*.

PLUTARCH, celebrated biographer, died *circa* B.C. 120.

POLYBIUS, Greek historian, B.C. 204–122. His history deals with Greece and Rome during the period 220–146, and is of great importance.

POMPEY the younger, born B.C. 75.

PRUSIAS, King of Bithynia, *circa* B.C. 190.

PYRRHUS, King of Epirus, B.C. 318–272, one of the greatest warriors of ancient days.

SALLUSTIUS, CRISPUS CAIUS, Roman historian, B.C. 86–35, excluded from the Senate on account of his debauchery.

SENECA, LUCIUS ANNÆUS, Roman philosopher, B.C. 3–65, belonged to the Stoic school, and was believed to have been acquainted with St. Paul.

SERVIUS TULLIUS, sixth King of Rome, changed the constitution so that the plebs obtained political power.

SEVERUS, Roman Emperor, born B.C. 146, died at York 211. Wrote history of his own reign.

SOLON, celebrated Athenian legislator, died *circa* B.C. 558, aged eighty. Established the principle that property, not birth, should entitle to state honours and offices.

STRABO, Greek historian and geographer, born *circa* B.C. 50, died *circa* B.C. 20. His chief work in seventeen books gives a description of different countries, manners and customs, particulars of their history, and eminent men. {p257}

SUETONIUS, Roman historian, born *circa* B.C. 75, died *circa* 160.

TACITUS, Roman historian, born *circa* B.C. 54. His *Annales* cover the period B.C. 14–68.

THEOCRITUS, Greek poet, lived third century B.C., considered the father of pastoral poetry. Visited the court of Ptolemæus Soter.

THRASYBULUS, Athenian naval commander, died B.C. 389.

THUCYDIDES, Greek historian, born B.C. 471, died *circa* 401. His great work, the history of the Peloponnesian War, is the first example of philosophical history.

TIBERIUS, CLAUDIUS NERO, Roman Emperor, B.C. 42–B.C. 37, succeeded Augustus B.C. 14.

TIMOLEON, Greek general, born in Corinth *circa* B.C. 400, died 337. Resided at Syracuse.

TISSAPHERNES, Persian satrap, died B.C. 395. An intimate friend of Alcibiades.

TRAJANUS, MARCUS ULPIUS (Trajan), Roman Emperor, B.C. 52–117.

Succeeded to the throne in 98, and surnamed by the Senate “Optimus.”

VARRO, Roman writer, born B.C. 116, died 28. Reputed the most learned among the Romans, and wrote 490 books.

VAUBAN, SÉBASTIEN LE PRESTRE DE, Marshal of France and great military engineer, 1633–1707. Published works on sieges, frontiers, etc., and left twelve folio volumes of MS., and was pronounced the most upright, simple, true, and modest man of his age.

VESPASIAN, TITUS FLAVIUS, Roman Emperor, born B.C. 9, died 79.

VOPISCUS, Syracusan, flourished *circa* B.C. 304. Wrote histories.

XENOPHON, Greek historian, born *circa* B.C. 450, a disciple and friend of Socrates.

THE END.

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Original spelling and grammar have been generally retained, with some exceptions noted below.

Original printed page numbers are shown like <{p-xiv}> or <{p14}>.

Footnotes have been relabeled 1–117, converted to endnotes, and moved to the ends of the relevant chapters.

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Page [xi](#). The phrase <Weath of Nations> was changed to <Wealth of Nations>.

Page [xiii](#). The phrase <'I am much pleased with> was changed to <"I am much pleased with>.

Page [xxiii](#). The phrase <int his room while> was changed to <into his room while>.

Page [144](#). The phrases <Xerxes's army> and <Xerxes' army> are both retained.

Page [157n](#). The phrase <much rom their business> was changed to <much from their business>.

Pages [162](#)–163. The phrases <"that in the year> (p. 162) and <north exposition."> (p. 163) contain unbalanced quotation marks in the original. Two new double quotation marks have been inserted to balance these, at <"'Hybernum fracta> and <"He speaks of that river's>.

Page [254](#). The phrase <SAMILLUS, MARCUS FURIUS> was changed to <CAMILLUS, MARCUS FURIUS>.

Page [258](#). This (originally unnumbered) page begins sixteen pages of advertisements from The Walter Scott Publishing Co. A new heading <ADVERTISEMENT> was inserted. This new heading contains also the footer text that was originally printed on each page of the ads section. The ads were printed in several different styles with considerable variation. The styling has been herein greatly simplified. Several large curly brackets <}> that graphically indicate combination of information on two or more lines of text have been eliminated, by restructuring the text. Ditto marks <Do.> were also removed.